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Literacy: Genocide's Silken Instrument

by

Phyllis Grace Steeves

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In

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Dr. Brenda Spencer (Supervisory Committee)

Dr. Diane Conrad

Dr. Stan Wilson

Dr. David Smith

Dr. Cecille DePass

Abstract

Literacy: Genocide's Silken Instrument

The concept of literacy has developed from a single strand construct, from an ability to read and write to a powerful and complex web that encompasses other concepts and theories, as well as a wide range of skills and communication methods. This work explores the finer points of a process which facilitated this gradual expansion of the concept of literacy. The process explored herein considers actions / events / discourses that facilitated creation of a concept which reframes Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being under a Eurocentric construct: the concept of "Aboriginal literacy." For some users this term may be a reference to principles of instruction; methods or approaches useful when working with Aboriginal peoples in educational or other environments. For others the term may be more encompassing.

The expansion of the concept of literacy, specifically in relation to the concept of 'Aboriginal literacy,' is detailed in this work as relegating the distinct knowledge systems of Aboriginal peoples to the level of words, theories and discourses. Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being will no longer be positioned as distinct and valued knowledge systems, but will slip into an abyss of "'literacies"' and competencies. This discourse-based erasure of Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being, foundational to personal and collective well being, will facilitate further erasure. Distinguishing aspects of Aboriginal peoples' cultures – beliefs, values, and behaviours – are at risk of being erased from practice, memory, and ultimately history. That such an outcome is possible is

demonstrated in this work as a slow yet steady assault on the well being of Aboriginal peoples.

The processes associated with the expansion of the concept of literacy are being likened to those of an orb spider spinning a web. Also, through a discussion of real and potential outcomes, literacy is introduced herein as one of genocide's many instruments. This work provides a snapshot of the finer points of a process which threatens the well being of Aboriginal peoples.

Foreword

The process presented herein is likened to the process followed by an orb spider when spinning a web. Endorsement to use the spider web making process as a guide for the development of my thinking came to me in a dream, prompting me to move forward in this daunting task.

In the dream I saw what appeared to be a portion of a white fence; specifically the meeting point of a fence board and post. Built into a corner, and initially unrecognizable, was a white, fist-sized mass of what could be described as fine, crystallized angel hair. Although the mass was crystallized, in the dream I was aware that it was malleable, a supple yet prickly orb.

As I pondered this image, now preserved in my mind, I realized it was a spider web whose flexible fibrils had themselves crystallized and become laden with innumerable tiny crystals so dense as to make the web appear orb-like. This dream provided me assurance about using a spider web to ground the theory I would present in this work; significantly, it also signaled to me that the theory itself had crystallized.

This incorporeal dream crystallization indicated to me that the components necessary for this academic journey were in place. The challenge that remained was to make manifest the intangible in the physical. These words on a page are a physical manifestation of the intangible. As such, they facilitate use of the components and the whole as a tool in safeguarding the well being of Aboriginal peoples. Throughout this journey I discovered subtle clues to the manifestation of

orality in my own life, a topic embedded in my being and work, but held aside for another journey.

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Chapter One

Grounding and Introducing the Research

These first keystrokes signal the beginning of a procrastinated journey that will prompt and be driven by periods of intense personal reflection. They also signal the imminent and welcome completion of a journey thru the realm of academics, 'officially' embarked upon in January 2005. Without doubt this work, this journey, will also lead to destinations not anticipated from forgotten or unrecognized starting point. These beginnings lie in wait for their moments in time, the moments when each starting pointing will rise to a level of consciousness where they can be acknowledged for their contribution/s to the journey.

If I were to tell this tale in chronological order, I would begin with the early 90's and my professional initiation into the field of literacy. This came through a position I had with the Métis Nation of Alberta Association (MNA) where I worked first as an analyst to create an annotated bibliography of Métis specific literacy materials and later as coordinator of a literacy program. Literacy in those days was, as it is today, an elusive concept that was constantly being defined and redefined. I jumped into the fray and considered what literacy meant for me, a Cree Métis, and perhaps for others like me. Following research and reflection I determined literacy was one's ability to use written language – text – to help create and achieve personal and community goals. This determination purposely left space for and was a subtle nod to a range of other skills equally important in helping an individual create and achieve personal and community

goals; personal beliefs as they relate to communication commanded an acknowledgement, however restrained, of the limitations of text.

After a short season with the MNA, I turned to other employment opportunities and postsecondary education before returning to work in the field of literacy. This return marked the beginning of more than a decade's work with a mainstream inner city adult literacy association. It also marked the beginning of a period of seduction by and into mainstream thinking in relation to literacy. Over time, following closer associations with mainstream literacy practitioners and continued employment within a mainstream literacy program I began to advocate for inclusion of oral skills when defining literacy. Rationale for this was based on personal beliefs as they relate to the limitations of text, a perceived marginalizing of Aboriginal peoples and a desire to acknowledge in numerous ways the historical and enduring value of other ways of thinking and communication such as orality, the latter being long and continuously associated with Aboriginal peoples.

Nevertheless, opportunity for learning abounded during this period and in 2002 I was granted a sabbatical and my thinking turned once again to postsecondary education. This journey began to crystallize; I undertook a Master's degree in International Peace Studies at Trinity College University of Dublin. A fatigue had settled in during the previous years and as I prepared to leave for a season, I looked forward to a new beginning. I imagined studying topics far removed from the realm of literacy and other issues related to Aboriginal peoples. However, it proved true that you can take the woman out of

the country but you can't take the country out of the woman. The title of my Master's thesis was Cultural Genocide Practices: A Case Study of Canada's Métis (Steeves, 2003). While they did not bring the escape I had imagined, my studies were fulfilling work nonetheless.

Upon my return to Canada, I resumed my work in the inner city and began to reflect on present discourse surrounding literacy and its potential impact on Aboriginal peoples. The concept had become increasingly inclusive and was being used to describe (or indicate a need for) competence in relation to terminology / skills in a given area: terms included computer literacy, financial literacy, and health literacy, for example, and had become the norm across disciplines and practices. In fact, the concept of Aboriginal literacy now encompassed principles of instruction and the ways of being and knowing of Aboriginal peoples (George 2002, Antone 2003, Curwen Doige 2001, Balanoff & Chambers 2005).

The inclusiveness of the concept of literacy, which I had earlier endorsed and contributed to, was now causing concern. My previous acceptance of and contributions to the expanding concept of literacy had stemmed from a desire to ensure that the traditions and ways of being and knowing associated with orality were acknowledged and maintained. I saw the inclusion of "orality" in the powerful construct of literacy as an avenue that would help to safeguard the well being of Aboriginal peoples over the long term. This avenue, endorsed by mainstream and Aboriginal practitioners and academics alike, appeared to be a logical and effective route to the desired end at that point in time.

Nevertheless, I questioned what this and other inclusions under the construct of literacy might mean to Aboriginal peoples over the long term. I began to wonder how my grandchildren might be impacted by this inclusion of Aboriginal peoples' ways of being and knowing under the powerful construct of "literacy" as defined by the dominant society. I saw that such inclusion might have my grandchildren pondering their identity in much the same way as I had begun to ponder mine during my early years as a result of dealing with shifting discourse (more about this later). And so I have come full circle and, at this moment in time and through this work, I am weighing the advantages and disadvantages of accepting the concept of "Aboriginal literacy" as one of many "literacies" for the coming generations.

As evidenced by the chronological snapshot presented above, the conceptual underpinnings of this research stem from perspectives developed through critical reflection during and of my life experiences. Perspectives related to my cultural heritage are primary. This heritage has strong roots in the Cree Métis community of Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta, an annual destination for thousands of Aboriginal peoples who make this pilgrimage to holy water. As outlined above, other perspectives developed through academic study and as a result of well over a decade's work as a practitioner working primarily with adults in the field of literacy. These perspectives, along with others, have helped to create the lens through which I view, describe and engage with the world. Indeed, in this context, they are inseparable.

Several key areas of intellectual interest have emerged as a result of my personal, professional and academic experiences. These have crystallized into the conceptualization of this work. It would be difficult to identify a specific place or time where I suddenly 'saw' the issues with clarity. However, there are guide posts that help to mark the path of this journey: from a gradual crystallization of the topic to completion of this writing. Through the course of this academic inquiry, such points / directions will be examined.

More specifically, following this introduction a philosophical backdrop for the research will be explored in a chapter related to terminology and its use. This is followed by Chapter Three, *Reading the Literature,* which describes two fields of study, literacy and genocide, which together and individually provide a framework for the study. Chapter Four addresses research design, including the principles which guide the work. This leads to Chapter Five which introduces a literal and metaphorical journey into a spider's web building process. Chapters 6-11 each describe a different phase of a spider's web building process and each of these phases is aligned with a theoretical position. Chapter 12 offers alternative locations for web construction and Chapter 13 concludes the work.

Prior to introducing the first stanza of a poem by Mary Howitt (1829) and in closing this introduction, I acknowledge the ground breaking work of a host of Aboriginal scholars – Cree and Métis among them – who have brought closer the tantalizing possibility of framing new genres of inquiry based on "our own traditions, practices and epistemologies" (Kuokkanen, 2001). Without their contributions, this work would be far more daunting.

The Spider And The Fly

Mary Howitt (1799-1888)

"Will you walk into my parlor?" said the Spider to the Fly,

"'Tis the prettiest little parlor that ever you did spy;

The way into my parlor is up a winding stair,

And I have many curious things to show you when you are there."

"Oh no, no," said the Fly, "to ask me is in vain;

For who goes up your winding stair can ne'er come down again."

(Howitt, 1829, ¶ 1)

Chapter Two

Framing the Research

Significant guideposts or marking places situate the research in the following areas of study: literacy and its evolution as a concept for academic study, and genocide studies. This interdisciplinary approach to conceptualization of the research topic underscores a research methodology grounded in an awareness and belief that basic principles for research – those that guide action – cross disciplines and contexts. As such the principles are applicable in other spheres of life, and as well, other realms of study. Martin (2006) suggests "relatedness occurs across contexts and is maintained within conditions that are: physical, spiritual, political, geographical, intellectual, emotional, social, historical, sensory, instinctive and intuitive" (p. 78). This is in keeping with Goduka (2000) who reports Indigenous peoples have, "for untold generations… understood that nothing exists in isolation" (¶22). Such beliefs encourage an approach to seeking information / knowledge that weaves or spins together seemingly unrelated concepts in anticipation of the inevitable points of fusion that will be revealed in the future.

This research illustrates how the areas of study provide points of fusion. Each exemplifies significant ways in which their practices and theories have reframed or are reframing, knowledge about the ways of being and knowing of Aboriginal peoples. It also illustrates how individually and, more dangerously, collectively, such areas of study result in outcomes suggestive of genocide in relation to Aboriginal peoples.

Terminology

Sections addressing terminology are used for the purpose of ensuring consistency within the document in relation to definitions and understanding of terms used in particular contexts. While such explanations are often necessary, most terms used in this document are, for the most part, readily recognized and understood, particularly by the probable readership (of individuals with an interest in and some knowledge of the subject/s being explored). As needed, definitions of less familiar terms or concepts are presented in context as they arise in the paper. However, the very use of some terms / concepts calls for deeper explanations. Such explanations serve to create awareness by readers of meanings that may extend beyond dictionary definitions and be attached to the terms / concepts. These explanations may also remind readers that meaning and connotations related to specific terms / concepts may differ from person to person. Factors which may influence assigned meaning include individual interpretation, lived experience and relative freedom to choose or reject certain terms. Here I turn to the realm of semantics.

Semantics, "the branch of linguistics concerned with the nature, structure, and esp., the development and changes, of the meanings of speech forms, or with contextual meaning" (Guralnik, 1972, p. 1293), is reported to have "three basic concerns" (Semantics. n.d.. ¶ 5). Of particular relevance to this work are "the relations of words to the objects denoted by them [and] the relations of words to the interpreters of them" (Semantics. n.d.. ¶ 5). Relevant to these concerns is a call for the field of semantics to "take into account the psychological questions of

how people form concepts and how these relate to word meanings" (Semantics A. n.d.. ¶ 4). In this research, such questions provide a backdrop to the approach (topic) of "reframing" the meanings of literacy in such a way as to facilitate erasure of Indigenous ethos. Such questions also speak to how and why word meanings are altered through time. In this work, the exploration will focus specifically on new meanings assigned to the concept of literacy. Using a spider's web building process as a conceptual framework, I will discuss how potential meanings associated with "literacy" may facilitate erasure from practice, memory, and indeed history, the beliefs, values, and behaviours – the entire ethos – of Aboriginal peoples' (cultures).

"Changing culture is conceived on 'both [or several] sides' as partly a matter of changing language" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 18) and this research explores the potential evolution of the term / concept of literacy and how this evolution may impact the actual cultures of Cree, Dene, Métis and other Indigenous peoples. Use of genocide as a context for this study revealed a need to re-assess the concept of genocide itself as well as the use of terms / concepts such as Indian, Métis and Aboriginal, previously accepted widely by Aboriginal peoples and non Aboriginal peoples alike. These terms are now being questioned widely by many stakeholders. The questioning of such terms, primary to identity, is indicative of a crisis of identity. Nevertheless, there are few alternatives being suggested. Further, despite the serious scrutiny around the origins and usage of such terms – this will be addressed in the next chapter – it is essential at this point in the discourse to acknowledge the value of the terms.

Palmer (1981) suggests "words do not mean what they might most obviously be thought to mean, that there is some other meaning besides the 'literal' meaning of the words" (p. 4). Indeed, the *use* of the term "Indian" itself may be representative of a sense of pride. Such usage may also represent or be considered a form of resistance, a line in the sand of the "evolving terminology relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002, p. 1). Others may find the term offensive and lacking in the specificity and respect often implied in more precise identity terms such as "Cree" or "Dene." The discourse of "evolving terminology" is also subject to legal and political factors: Indian is a term used in legal documents ranging from the 1752 Peace and Friendship Treaty (Treaty Policy Directorate, n.d. ¶ 1) to the current federal Indian Act and Indian Register. "To be eligible to receive benefits under the *Indian Act* [emphasis in original text], individuals must be registered in the Indian register" (Status, n.d. ¶ 1). Finally, Section 35, Part (2) of the Canadian Constitution refers to the collective, "Indian, Métis, Inuit" (Canadian Constitution, 1982) as "Aboriginal." Clearly, despite the 'evolving terminology' " (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002, p. 1) legal, economic and other benefits continue to hinge on the continued use of the historic term "Indian" and the more contemporary term, "Aboriginal."

Finally, there is the minefield of political correctness / "incorrectness," which includes those who consider the term "Indian" politically correct as well as those who do not. Fairclough (2003) suggests "both those who are labeled 'PC' and those who label them 'PC' are engaged in a politics that is focused upon

representations, values and identities – in short, a 'cultural politics'" (p. 17). Such cultural politics is also applicable to the expansion of the concept of literacy detailed later in this work. Further, the crisis of identity implied in and facilitated by such evolving terminology demonstrates a potential, and threatening, outcome of reframing Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being under the construct of literacy. It appears, then, that prudent use of these and other related terms and concepts are called for and that denial or attempts to erase the history of such terminology and usage would serve only to further similar processes of erasure in other contexts.

Although this research is not designed specifically to address issues related to the use of terms / concepts such as "Indian," "Métis" and "Aboriginal" their history of usage informs this work. Finally, it is important to note the plurality of the word "peoples" in this context for "it recognizes the real diversity of Indigenous peoples and epistemologies and the right to self-identity" (Iseke-Barnes, 2003, p. 212).

Chapter Three

Reading the Literature

There is a body of literature, situated within a range of disciplines, which describes how erasure of the ethos of Aboriginal peoples has been and continues to be facilitated in countless ways. Nevertheless, this research focuses on the field of education and the concept of literacy, specifically its processes, practices and evolution. The processes described, which threaten the well being of Aboriginal peoples, are situated in a Canadian context and in the field of literacy, However, such descriptions and processes are easily applied in other contexts. Other threatened peoples such as the Aboriginal peoples within Australia and the United States, for example, would likely find this work relevant and useful for their own analyses and efforts in the study and practice of literacy. Although the work could be applicable in numerous other contexts, this research specifically focuses on the erasure of Aboriginal cultures particularly through theories and practices of education in a Canadian context.

Past, Present and Future

To provide an example of such a process, one which impacted on my personal well being, I will turn to my own experience and one of my early childhood memories. As I look back on this incident I realize it may be memorable for numerous reasons, one being its long term impact. It may also be memorable because it may have prompted my first, and possibly most powerful, 'paradigm shift.'

I was perhaps four or five years old and I was in motion, moving from the back porch into the front room of my grandparents' house in Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta. When I look back to those moments I see myself frozen in time and space in the middle of the kitchen. In my mind's eye the kitchen encircles me, and as I twirl the familiar furnishings appear in their place: the grand oak icebox with its cold tin interior standing in the corner; two water pails on a washstand with the familiar red and white enamel dippers hanging behind them; the counter which held a wash basin and gas hot plate for summer days and quick boiling of water for coffee, tea or other purposes; an oak Hoosier with the flour bin removed and replaced with shelves for cups and glasses, its enameled top routinely pulled out to knead bannock or roll out pie crusts; a large wood stove for cooking, heating and standing around late in the evenings or early mornings; entry doors to other rooms separated by a dividing wall lined with chairs on one side and hooks and coats hanging above a trap door to the root cellar on the other, and finally numerous chairs surrounding a table next to the door I just ran through. I am looking quizzical and confused, having just heard my grandfather make a comment about "the Indians." I don't recall many of the details, only that I heard him say, "the Indians are coming." Possibly some acquaintances or friends from the nearby reserve were coming to visit. Since he was a fisherman, he may have been preparing to trade fish for moose meat. The comment was not derogatory in any way; he was simply and clearly speaking about Indians as if he was not one himself. I was confused, a confusion that arose when my grandfather placed himself outside of a category I thought he belonged in. This was, of course, the

same category wherein I had placed myself. As I stood in the kitchen that day, I began to look at myself and my world in a different way. My grandfather's statement is etched clearly in my memory.

I now have a better understanding of why my grandfather spoke as he did; as a Métis man, he strongly identified with the Métis community, a community he recognized as distinct from 'First Nations' or 'Indian' communities. This is in keeping with Weaver's (2001) assertion that "before contact, indigenous people identified themselves as distinct from other indigenous people and constructed their identities in this way" (p. 242). As for me, now two generations removed and an 'urban Aboriginal,' I have been constantly exposed to the perceptions and discourses of dominant Canadian culture. Recent discourse aside, over time a discourse developed that facilitated categorization of Aboriginal peoples under a single term: Indian. Throughout my formative years and well into adulthood, the discourse in Canada facilitated a belief that all Aboriginal peoples are simply Indians, a single homogenous group who share the same culture. Indeed, even today, there are Canadians who still adhere to such a belief.

Use of the term "Indian" has a long history in Canada and this term is readily accepted as having been introduced by Columbus (Moffat and Sebastián, 1998, p. 15). Creation and use of the term "was advantageous for the colonizers because it enabled them to co-opt the identity and collectivity of the people they called Indians by denying them the chance to be considered real people with real tribal names living in particular places" (Donald, 2004, p. 27). Aboriginal peoples were later sub-categorized, using terminology that further eroded identity as

autonomous nations and encouraged division. Rather than being identified by nation (Gwich'in, Cree, etc.), Aboriginal peoples were and continue to be identified by status assigned and meted out by the federal government through federal legislation referred to as the Indian Act. Terminology related to this phenomenon includes Treaty Indian / Non-Treaty Indian, Half-breed, Status Indian / Non-Status Indian and more recently Bill C 31.[1] The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (2007) reports "there have been many rules for deciding who is eligible for registration as an Indian under the *Indian* Act [italics in original text]" (¶ 4). Issues related to terminology and status cross disciplines as well as contexts; examples may be drawn from the realm of statistics. Steeves (2009) cites the following two questions posed by Statistics Canada in the 2006 Census and draws attention to the terminology used to present the data: "Is this person an Aboriginal person, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit (Eskimo)?" (Statistics Canada, 2006, p. 10), and "Is this person a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the Indian Act of Canada? (Statistics Canada, 2006, p. 11). The data collected was reconfigured and presented to reflect 'contemporary' terms: "Inuit, Métis and First Nations" (Statistics Canada, in Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006, p. 4). Neither the original census document nor the publication mentions the cause / purpose of the intended / actual reconfiguration.

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[1] Bill C-31: "The pre-legislation name of the 1985 Act to Amend the Indian Act. This act eliminated certain discriminatory provisions of the Indian Act, including the section that resulted in Indian women losing their Indian status when they married non-Status men. Bill C-31 enabled people affected by the discriminatory provisions of the old Indian Act to apply to have their Indian status and membership restored" Retrieved June 25, 2009 from http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/tln-eng.asp . ¶ 8.

The practice of renaming, like other practices of genocide, has been utilized in a range of contexts to facilitate erasure. In New Zealand Smith (1999) reports the Maori are struggling to restore traditional "geographical names of some of New Zealand's mountains and significant sites which were renamed randomly after British people and places" (p. 157). In the German context, Hitler, in 1936, "mentioned that Jews should not be called Siegfried or Thusnelda. This utterance sufficed to initiate legislation on the matter" (Bankier, 1988, p. 15). Additionally, in 1938 the Nazis imposed a requirement on all Jewish women to add the name Sarah and men to add the name Israel to their existing names on all legal documents (Bankier, 1988, Saenger 2006, The History Place, 1997). The renaming of place has also been utilized in Canada. Lac Ste Anne itself provides an example. Before a mission was established on the shores of this lake Mitchell and Prepas (1990) report it was called "by the Cree name Manitou Sakhahigan" (¶2), meaning "Lake of the Spirit" (Holgrem, Holgrem as cited in Mitchell, Prepas, 1990). It was renamed by Father Thibault for his patron saint, Saint Anne, in 1843 (¶2).

Indigenous peoples' identities in Canada then, have often been fluid and in the hands of others, the borders defined by others through language. This fluid border naturally becomes a factor in maintaining cultural identity. This is particularly likely when such terms are embraced and used by society in general and become the norm, as they have been in Canada. With time and the course of changes through reclassifications and "new" terminology / names, personal identification with a particular Indigenous nation or tribe was eroded. It has

become necessary to identify oneself to government, educators and others – including statisticians – by using dominant terminology or assigned categories of self-identification. Further, the thread of common shared identity amongst the community members was and continues to be weakened and the sense of kinship felt within family units undermined by divisions such as 'Non-Status Indian' or 'Status.' Indeed, parents and children, brothers and sisters, were often and continue to be divided by such categorization, and ultimately, the imposed systems of self-identification. In turn, the collective identity of each individual nation is eroded and the system then perpetuates itself. Such renaming has been one method of promoting erasure of distinct Aboriginal cultures; individuals and communities have been and continue to be encouraged or coerced into reframing their identities into terminology that supports such erasure.

The impact of such constructs and practices of the dominant culture was and continues to be intergenerational; it was manifested in both my grandfather's choice of terminology and in my reaction. My experience in the kitchen that day marks the day I began to question my identity. It may also mark the place and time where my interest in genocide studies was born. My experience and the outcomes of that moment in my grandparents' kitchen may be extended to the much larger context of entire communities of Aboriginal peoples who continue to grapple with the results of long term, continuing assaults on their individual and collective identities.

Discourse and its processes have been briefly explored at multiple levels and aligned with personal experience. I turn now to a detailed exploration of

literacy. The context for the discussion moves from one based on a primarily physical realm to that of the intangible, from a context that was framed by the very color of one's skin, where one lived or if one received benefits to a context grounded in the intangibles of world views.

Literacy

Current discourses related to the concept of literacy also point to issues and impacts of categorization and semantics, raising again the potential for "literacy" to contribute to the erasure of Aboriginal peoples' ways of being and knowing. A current and inclusive definition of the term, defined from within the field by a well known mainstream agency – The Centre for Literacy of Quebec – follows:

> Literacy is a complex set of abilities needed to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture – alphabets, numbers, visual icons – for personal and community development. The nature of these abilities, and the demand for them, vary from one context to another.
>
> In a technological society, literacy extends beyond the functional skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening to include multiple literacies such as visual, media and information literacy. These new literacies focus on an individual's capacity to use and make critical judgements about the information they encounter on a daily basis.
>
> However a culture defines it, literacy touches every aspect of individual and community life. It is an essential foundation for learning

> through life, and must be valued as a human right. (The Centre for Literacy of Quebec, 2005, ¶1).

The above perspectives extend well beyond, yet include as a core necessity, what Webster's (1972) defines as literacy, "the state or quality of being literate; ability to read and write" (Guralnik, 1972, p. 825). Clearly there has been an evolution in meanings for the term: from the ability to read and write to a much more inclusive view that has facilitated the creation of a new term, "literacies." The concept of "literacies" as defined above incorporates a range of skills, including speaking and listening, skills that have historically been associated with the term "oral". Once again I turn to Webster's for definition: "uttered by the mouth; oral refers to that which is spoken, as distinguished from that which is written or otherwise communicated" (Guralnik, p. 999).

Reference to the written leads me to another expansion of the concept by French sociologist, Jousse. Jousse (2000).suggests that expressions of culture, such as beadwork and sculpture, be referred to as forms of writing (as cited in Conolly & Sienaert, 2003, p. 1). Similarly, Battiste (1984) named Micmac artefacts such as "pictographs, petroglyphs, notched sticks, and wampum… written communication" (Abstract).

The introduction of cultural expressions in this context prompts mention of "cultural literacy" (Silver, 2001, p. 26) which Silver explained is "the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultural groups" (p. 25). This is compatible with "visual literacy" (The Centre for Literacy of Quebec, 2005, ¶1), currently defined as one's ability to interpret information presented in a range of

graphic forms (Weaver, 1999, ¶1). As demonstrated by the use of literacy in such contexts, it appears the term is intended to be synonymous with competence in or possession of a body of knowledge or skill in a specific area. In Healy (2007) the concept of "critical literacy" is given purpose and defined as

> understanding that each author and each reader has a version of knowledge; versions differ according to life experience, society, and culture in which individuals develop concepts and knowledge. The purpose of critical literacy is to help students to suspend belief and disbelief during first encounters with text and knowledge, and to become more informed before judging (p. 210).

Not surprisingly, the term "multiliteracies," referring to "the variety of literacies we use to communicate within social and cultural groups, and of their modes of delivery" (Healy, 2007, p. 201) has become commonplace. Additional terms in the growing list of "literacies" include computer literacy, financial literacy, health literacy and Aboriginal literacy.

Chapters 5-11 draw on additional literature and broaden the description of the concept's evolution. Nevertheless, this introduction to the various concepts of literacy suggests there have been paradigm shifts in the field. The review of the literature spoke to this, as evidenced by Delker (1986), who confirmed "literacy still means the ability to work with the printed or written word" (Abstract). However, he also stated "It is also evident… literacy encompasses writing, speaking and listening, computing, and even problem solving skills" (Abstract). More recently, Hamilton (2000) suggested there has been a shift from "a

psychological or cognitive model of literacy as a set of skills to one which includes the sociocultural practices associated with reading and writing" (¶1). Hamilton also stated "literacy competence and need cannot be understood in terms of absolute levels of skill" (¶1) but rather as "relational concepts, defined by the social and communicative practices with which individuals engage in the various domains of their life world" (¶1). This approach is now referred to in the field as "New Literacy Studies" (Hamilton, 2000, ¶1).

This view is not so far removed from that of Curwen Doige (2001) who, in exploring Aboriginal literacy, defined it as "the ability to use reading, writing, reasoning, listening, and speaking to make meaning from contemporary visual symbols that communicate ideas, values, and traditions in society" (p. 117). Further, First Peoples educator Battiste stated "literacy is a relative social concept more reflective of culture and context than of the levels of formal instruction by which it is usually measured" (as cited in Antone, 2003B, p. 9). Finally, Antone suggests "'Aboriginal literacy' describes Aboriginal peoples' distinct perspective on literacy, in the context of Native education as a whole, and includes culture and language" (Antone, 2003A, p. 11).

It appears then that a much broader concept of literacy, often inclusive of Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being, has gained a level of acceptance among First Peoples' educators and mainstream academics and practitioners within the field. Nevertheless, the focus of my work is that the situating or alignment of Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being within the Eurocentric construct of literacy threatens the preservation and well being of

Aboriginal peoples. A process which facilitated creation of the threatening concept of Aboriginal literacy is detailed in Chapters 5-11. Finally, while this work focuses specifically and primarily on new meanings assigned to the concept of literacy, it also wrestles with interpretations / meanings assigned to the concept of genocide as a directly related but secondary topic. My thinking and my work has prompted me to draw direct connections between the concepts and practices of "literacy" and the well being of Aboriginal peoples. Consequently I include in the following section a brief, but not exhaustive, related commentary on the concept and practices of genocide.

Genocide, Cultural Genocide, Ethnocide?

The realm of genocide is not without its own history. In 1933 Raphael Lemkin proposed a forerunner to the concept of genocide, proposing a draft law to ban barbarity (Shaw, 2007). In 1944, drawing from the Greek *genos* meaning race/tribe and the Latin *cide* meaning killing, Lemkin first used the term genocide – the term he had coined – in his book *Axis rule in occupied Europe: Laws of occupation, analysis of government, proposals for redress* (Roberts, A. Guelff, R. 2000). He wrote

> Generally speaking, *genocide* does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and

social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups (as cited in Heidenrich, 2001. p. 4).

Lemkin continued to work with the concept of genocide, helping to draft The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide that was first adopted by the United Nations in 1948. In the decades since Lemkin coined and developed the concept there have been countless modifications to the concept. Few, if any, are uncontested.

Fein (1990) defined genocide as "sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity directly or through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members, sustained regardless of the surrender or lack of threat offered by the victim" (p. 24). Charney (1994) suggested what he termed a "generic definition of genocide…genocide in the generic sense is the mass killing of substantial numbers of human beings, when not in the course of military action against the military force of an avowed enemy, under conditions of the essential defencelessness and helplessness of the victims" (p. 75). More recently Martin (2007) stated "*Genocide* is *a form of violent social conflict, or war, between armed power organizations that aim to destroy civilian social groups and those groups and other actors who resist this destruction* [Emphasis in original text]"(p. 154).

Practices associated with and designed to annihilate (Lemkin, 1948), physically destroy (Fein, 1990), or "achieve mass killing of substantial numbers"

(As cited in Martin, 2007, p. 31), are well recognized. Killing forces utilized in Rwanda stand as an example. Reyntjens (1996) reports

> for the city of Kigali alone, there existed a network of about 30 cells, each numbering between 20 and 30 armed militiamen, ready to strike if the order was given. This was a well-organized killing machine, able to kill one thousand persons per hour, within one hour of the initial order (p. 248).

There are some who contend there is little difference between genocide as described above and other forms of violence directed at a particular cultural or ethnic group. Others contend intentional and systematic killing of entire nations such as those mentioned call for distinct and separate categorization. Heidenrich (2001) demonstrates the dichotomy by calling attention to "debates over whether horrors such as the Cambodian "killing fields" deserved to be called "genocide" or not" (p. 4). Despite or perhaps because of this controversy an increasing number of scholars, non-governmental organizations, political bodies and individual nations are recognizing the threat of practices that, while seemingly lacking "the aim of annihilating the groups themselves" (Lemkin, as cited in Heidenrich, 2001, p. 4), threaten continuation of ways of being for entire nations.

Issues of categorization and terminology in relation to the concept are evident. The umbrella of *absolute* genocide is used by some; others choose euphemisms such as *assimilation* or perhaps *forced assimilation*. Oetter (2006) notes, "within genocide studies, some scholars now place particular emphasis on the concept of ethnocide understood as "cultural genocide"" (p. 6). Skutnall-

Kangas (2000) suggests cultural and linguistic genocide are "analogous concepts to (physical) genocide" (p. 222). Skutnall-Kangas' choice of terminology when clarifying linguistic genocide as "(actively) **killing a language without killing the speakers** [emphasis in original text]… or (through passivity) **letting a language die** [emphasis in original text]" (p. 312) suggests awareness of intention and possible outcomes. Fein (1993) also addresses intention suggesting "deliberate destruction of the culture of a distinct group without physical annihilation of its members is most often termed *ethnocide* [emphasis in original text] p. 10).

Genocide, ethnocide, politicide, democide, cultural and linguistic genocide, degenerate war; semantics aside, historically and currently, there is little doubt a definitive designation remains elusive. This research however, while acknowledging issues arise due to the lack of a concrete definition, does not seek to conclusively define the concept for the reader. In this work what the action is called or how it is defined is secondary and considered a matter for each reader to determine.

It does however encourage readers to consider personal beliefs as these relate to the concept; to look beyond and as necessary set aside the discourse related to terminology / categorization and consider the subtle practices which may threaten the well being of entire nations. There is a focus however on creating awareness of the subtlety of the process of genocide in many contexts and ways this elusive process threatens the well being of Aboriginal peoples. Such awareness will facilitate implementation of measures designed to reverse

harmful effects among Aboriginal peoples as well as protect from future harm. Readers will note the term "genocide" is used. Rationale for its use includes a nod to Lemkin who first coined the term, the term's familiarity among the intended readership and widespread awareness and understanding – if not agreement – of conceptual underpinnings of the term. Such underpinnings acknowledge and encapsulate humanity's capacity to cause extreme harm to entire nations, harm that may result in the loss of the targeted nations real and potential contributions to humanity. I turn now to a fusion of education and genocide, an exploration of education as an instrument of harm, to further contexualize the work.

Education: An Instrument of Genocide

History reveals that educational theories and policies have been useful tools in the facilitation of genocide in numerous eras and regions of the world. Thus genocide studies form a backdrop for this research. Its essence – "the indispensable conceptual characteristics" (Guralnik, 1972, p. 1121) both permeates and is the whole. The scent of genocide is pervasive throughout the field of education and genocide imbues all its practices.

To illustrate this point consider the case of Nazi Germany, where Hitler (1925) stated, "No boy and no girl must leave school without having been led to an ultimate realization of the necessity and essence of blood purity" (as cited in Blackburn, 1985, p. 14). To help achieve such a goal "history textbooks used brief character sketches (usually of military leaders) to convey the lessons of the past. Determined to keep the soldiering ethos alive, the Nazis institutionalized the model of the political fighter and promoted self-sacrifice and hardness in the

schools" (as cited in Blackburn, 1985, p. 116). Such discourse was further bolstered by "an almost endless quantity of impressive statistics designed to establish the invincibility of their war machine" (as cited in Blackburn, 1985, p. 136). Thus over time it became possible to "convince the nation not only that all its enemies were in fact one and indivisible but that in the cosmic struggle only one of the combatants – the Aryans or the Jews – would survive extinction" (as cited in Blackburn, 1985, p. 140). When Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany in 1933 (Adolf Hitler, 2009, ¶ 2), its citizens had already been primed for acceptance and subsequent action by years of exposure to a discourse tailored to foster Nazi propaganda. This discourse simultaneously denigrated people of Jewish descent and exalted the classification of people referred to by the Nazis as Aryan (Webster, 2009, ¶ 1).

Parallels may be drawn between the discourse, actions and outcomes of the Third Reich and those facilitated by the government of Canada. In the Canadian context, chronological evidence of a similar process exists; this was a process utilized by the government and others whose mandate was to "educate" Aboriginal children. An 1847 Report to the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada by Egerton Ryerson noted "the education of Indians consists not merely of training the mind but of a wearing of the habits and feelings of their ancestors and the acquirements of the language, arts and customs of civilized life" (as cited in Haig Brown, 1988, p. 29). The suggestion that Indians needed to acquire "the language, arts and customs of civilized life" (Ryerson, as cited in Haig Brown, p. 29) implied their existing ways of being and knowing were savage, uncivilized.

This ethnocentric perspective provided groundwork for later, more offensive and increasingly uncloaked racist discourse. A few decades later, with such preparatory groundwork circulating, discourse and resulting actions reflected the mounting hostility towards Indians by the federal government and other likeminded individuals and collectives. The following statement by Indian Commissioner Hayter Reed in 1889 stands as one example: "every effort should be directed against anything calculated to keep fresh in the memories of children habits and associations which it is one of the main objects of industrial institutions [schools] to obliterate" (as cited in Titley, 1986, p. 78). Reed sanctioned processes that would "sever young Indians' connections with their ancestral culture" (as cited in Titley, 1986, p. 79). This position implied the ancestral culture of "young Indians" (p. 79) must be at minimum buried and ideally wiped from their memory and obliterated from future generations. Such a position offered an overt ethnocentric stance that may be paralleled with that of the Third Reich towards Jews.

These are striking examples of how a discourse may be built to "systematically organize knowledge and experience, and repress alternatives through their dominance" (Outhwaite, Bottomore, 1993, p. 161). It may also represent what Outhwaite and Bottomore have named "authoritative discourse" (p. 161), and call for "unconditional allegiance" (Outhwaite, Bottomore, 1993, p. 161). The Third Reich and the Canadian federal government, having built an "authoritative discourse" (Outhwaite, Bottomore, 1993, p. 161) facilitated acceptance and implementation of genocidal practices within the governing and

mainstream communities. Discourse in both cases served as preparation for action. Outcomes of the actions facilitated by the discourse built by the Third Reich are well documented in the realm of genocide studies (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). In the Canadian context discourse supported, among other action, "compulsory attendance [at residential schools] for all [Indian] children ages 7-15 years. Children were forcibly taken from their families by priests, Indian agents and police officers" (Assembly of First Nations, n.d. ¶ 3). Effects of these and other harmful actions, facilitated by discourse and directed at Aboriginal peoples in numerous realms beyond education – medicine, citizenship, economics, etc. – continue to be discovered and explored.

This brief foray into the use of discourse and educational theories and policies as tools to facilitate genocide clearly suggests there is much to learn from encounters of atrocities carried out by authority figures in various eras. The brief snapshots of German and Canadian cases provide a frame of reference and help to explain the contextualization of this work in education and genocide studies.

This document presents literature explored to gain insight into theoretical viewpoints, processes and actual practices in the field of education which may threaten a birthright and preservation of the ethos of Aboriginal peoples for future generations.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

Discourse as it relates to research methodology is an undeniable aspect of this work. Although at times used interchangeably method and methodology are different aspects of the research process. Following, in some detail, are definitions of method drawn from Webster's:

> a way of doing anything; mode; procedure; process; esp., a regular, orderly, definite procedure or way of teaching, investigating, etc.; regularity and orderliness in action, thought, or expression; system in doing things or handling ideas; regular, orderly arrangement" (Guralnik, 1972, p. 894).

Methodology, on the other hand, is defined as "the science of method, or orderly arrangement; specif., the branch of logic concerned with the application of the principles of reasoning to scientific and philosophical inquiry; a system of methods, as in any particular science" (Guralnik, 1972, p. 895). In the research context, a key purpose of methodology is to aid in the identification and application of principles of reasoning, whereas method is more concerned with regularity and order. Application of these definitions suggests methodology relates to principles and beliefs that guide action; methods are about the concrete steps taken to reach a destination.

In this work the principles and beliefs that underpin the research methodology are grounded and informed by my being as a Cree Métis. My beliefs and experiences are inseparable. They relate to a Creator (metaphysics), the

universe and how it came to be (cosmology), what I believe about knowledge and why (epistemology), and beliefs about humankind and the nature of being (ontology). This framework of being and knowing informs every aspect of my life and as such extends into and informs my research framework, facilitating an approach that accepts and acknowledges an interdependency and interconnectedness in life overall. Such an interdependency and interconnectedness is applicable in all realms and ways of knowing and being, including those related to academic studies. This aligns with what Martin (2008) refers to as "the essence of Aboriginal worldviews… *relatedness* [emphasis in original text]" (p. 61); which "occurs across contexts and is maintained within conditions that are: physical, spiritual, political, geographical, intellectual, emotional, social, historical, sensory, instinctive and intuitive" (Martin, 2006, p. 78).

Key fundamental principles that inform my belief and knowledge systems are best described using the metaphor of journey. Human beings, despite a range of capacities, are sufficiently equipped with physical, emotional, mental and spiritual components necessary for their individual and personal life journeys. Certain components are physically manifested, others are intangible. These components are not static and, as the journey unfolds, the components are transformed. Physical and intangible forces influence these component transformations which may then be internally or externally manifested. The interconnectedness and interdependency of these components and forces are instrumental in the paths opened up and in the choices and outcomes of each

individual life journey. When all components are in balance, they are able to complement each other, increasing openness to the fullest potential for positive growth and transformation. Therefore, the process is most successful when balance is achieved and maintained throughout all stages of the journey.

The metaphor of journey is extended to this research context and applied on a micro level; the research is one of the paths on my life's journey. The components necessary for this particular aspect of my journey are in place but they are not static and as the journey unfolds the components, and therefore I, will be transformed. The physical and intangible forces that will influence and contribute to these transformations will be reflected in the research process and outcomes. Since the components are inseparable from the as yet unknown outcomes of transformative power created, the exact routing of the research cannot be articulated. However, as one result of these principles consideration has been given at all stages of the research process to the potential impact of the study on the community/ies as well as on individuals, including myself, who participate in the study. This is in keeping with Weber-Pillwax (1999) who stated, "Transformation... [will] be anticipated within every living thing participating in the research project" (p. 43). Finally, given this research is transformational for "every living thing participating in the research process" (p. 43), it has been grounded in a framework of Indigenous research methodology and maintained with a scholarly rigor in keeping with the magnitude of potentially transformative outcomes.

The research utilized a range of methods to collect, compile, analyze, reflect and ensure time / space to synthesize the information. Data were collected via document reviews of literature related to the areas of interest identified. Digital photography was used to capture images of nature which in turn were examined and reflected on. The evolution of discourses was tracked to reveal and articulate spaces created by the evolution of the concepts. In particular, a record of the evolution of the concept of literacy, its discourses and the relationships among and between these discourses has been considered.

The companionship, support and wisdom of Aboriginal peoples gifted / knowledgeable in various areas was received privately and through traditional talking circles. Knowledge gained specific to this work has been respectfully applied and as appropriate sources consulted prior to inclusion. Both oral and written methods were applied through the use of journaling and a "deliberate and substantial use of intellectual or emotional/spiritual reasonings" (Steeves, 2002, p. 3) which supplemented all steps in the research process. The study proved to be interdisciplinary; the literature base included genocide studies, philosophy, anthropology, native studies, whiteness studies, education and literacy. Finally, the research process itself was guided by an adherence to Indigenous community protocols, those ethics protocols and processes as set out by the University of Alberta, and other relevant governing protocols. As necessary – and it was necessary – timelines were modified to ensure adherence to the principles and beliefs which guide my journey.

Phenomena encountered during the work which demonstrate the principles outlined above were numerous. For example, early in the process I made an online purchase of a book by Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*. Upon receiving the text I set it on the shelf; its purchase had come about only because of the unavailability of the book truly desired: *Interface of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture*. As the end of the research process neared years later I hit a wall and began to question the suitability of the metaphor chosen to clarify a process (more about this process later). I turned to searches of words / concepts of significance to the theory and followed a trail of leads that led to a text of Ong's; the one sitting unopened on a shelf in my office. Within were the components necessary for that particular point of the journey; already in place awaiting my readiness and recognition of its purpose. This approach to research aligns with Smith's (1999) assertion that "Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values, and behaviors as an integral part of methodology. They are 'factors' to be built in to research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design" (p. 15).

Finally, these words provide a snapshot of my journey as it relates to this context. If I was to tell this story again the result would differ from what is presented here. This is desirable and is to be expected. Each time a story is told the retelling is filtered through a lens that has been altered; personal experience will have transformed the lens through which the events were previously seen and interpreted. Events and their impacts are reordered, benchmarks raised or lowered; what was previously seen as significant fades and is replaced by current

and equally significant thoughts. In other words, one understands the trauma of loss differently following the death of a parent; previous events prompting a sense of grief may be reordered and seen as less or more significant. Similarly, one's measure of joy may be altered following completion of the tasks – such as writing – associated with a given journey!

Chapter Five

Literacy: Genocide's Silken Instrument

While impossible to pinpoint the exact moment when the issues addressed in this work presented themselves with clarity there are nevertheless guide posts that help to mark the journey's path. An early guide post was a riverside walk early in 2004 while in Ottawa attending a national research consultation hosted by what was then known as the National Literacy Secretariat. As I strolled and contemplated current thinking in relation to literacy I began to wonder how reframing of Aboriginal peoples' ways of being and knowing using a construct of the dominant culture, literacy, would impact on future generations. Would my grandchildren be turning to me in my kitchen pondering their identity in much the same way as I had begun to ponder mine in my grandfather's kitchen?

I welcomed with relief and open arms a guide post indicating closure in late summer of 2009. This came via a dream and in the dream I saw what appeared to be a portion of a white fence; specifically the meeting point of a fence board and post. Built into a corner and initially unrecognizable was a white mass of what could be described as fine crystallized angel hair. Later, as I pondered this, I realized it was a spider web whose flexible fibres had themselves crystallized and become laden with innumerable tiny crystals so dense as to make the web appear orb like. This dream, in addition to providing assurance regarding use of a spider web to ground the theory presented in this work, also signaled the theory itself had crystallized. So what exactly had crystallized? What crystallized

was a theory illuminating how expansion of the concept of literacy threatens the well being of Aboriginal peoples.

Exploring a Theory

This work explores an intangible realm through an analysis of the finer points of a process which facilitated expansion of the concept of literacy. This process has negatively impacted on the well being of Aboriginal peoples and is poised to swallow up Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being. The process explored herein considers actions / events / discourses that facilitated creation of a concept which reframes Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being under a Eurocentric construct. I refer to the concept of Aboriginal literacy. History and my own experience, both recounted earlier, point to the threat to well being that such reframing carries.

The intangible notions presented here are defined by discourse and shaped as a result of countless retreats and / or minute advances or giant steps of thought into altered meanings. Similar altered meanings are positioned to consume, under the construct of Aboriginal literacy, Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being. That such an outcome is possible is demonstrated by the slow yet steady assault on the well being of Aboriginal peoples as articulated in the following chapters.

With the concept of Aboriginal literacy firmly established, another phase of this process is poised to be initiated, a phase which, if not brought to a halt, will continue the spiral of harm to the well being of Aboriginal peoples. Like the temporary spiral to be laid by the spider in Chapter 10, Aboriginal peoples' ways

of knowing and being are at risk of being consumed as they become intertwined with other concepts and regurgitated as another construct of literacy. The natural malleability of culture is facilitating this discourse as literacy and culture become intertwined and interchangeable; Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being, identified as distinct from others, is at risk of becoming a subcategory of literacy. Indeed, culture itself may become engulfed by the concept.

Thus the process explored herein and the one yet to unfold with its full potential as yet unrealized, one historical and one futuristic, are inseparable. This elusive process as it exists today with its connection to the past and the future is a snap shot of a genocidal process in progress. This process, although lacking the physicality normally associated with genocide, may be no less effective and has potential to culminate in absolute erasure of Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being.

The theory demonstrates the power of collective action; how when utilized individually outcomes may have marginal impact on the well being of a people but when utilized collectively and / or consecutively outcomes are more devastating. As such the well being of a given culture is subject to congruent processes whose outcomes are compounded. Such congruency and compounding of outcomes is explored in earlier work (Steeves, 2003) which identified practices of genocide in the Canadian context that impacted on the well being of Aboriginal peoples, particularly the Métis. Practices explored included those well recognized, such as segregation of Indigenous peoples from mainstream society through a

reserve[2] system, to the less recognized internal divisions alluded to earlier in the discussion related to the "evolving terminology relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002, p. 1). Early internal segregations are evident in the following excerpt from Treaty 10: "in the case of those who are Indians, a payment of a gratuity and annuity and the setting aside of lands as reserves, and in the case of those who are Half-breeds, by the issue of scrip[3]" (Laurier, as cited in Duhamel, 1966, ¶1). The compounded effect of the latter when considered in the context of the former is significant. Those refused treaty rights and issued scrip were forced to live in or on the margins of the mainstream already devoid of family and community as a result of the reserve system. Those on reserve and those refused a reserve of land were without full and ready support of family and community.

As demonstrated above the boundaries of such practices are fluid and absolute compartmentalization impossible. Attempts to compartmentalize in the context of the intangible conjure up an image of water as it laps onto an ever changing shoreline, driven by the ebb and flow of nature's cycles. The fluid border of the sea, while always visible, does not draw a line in the sand that one can point to and say "this is the border of the sea." Nevertheless, the sea is

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[2] "Land set aside by the federal government for the use and occupancy of an Indian group or band." *Information Circular: Definitions*. March 2000. Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

[3] "Scrip was a means to extinguish the Metis people's Aboriginal entitlement to the land in Manitoba, and later in Alberta, the North-West Territories, and Saskatchewan." Dorion, L. Paquin, T. Prefontaine, D. R. (Eds.) (2000). *The Metis Our People,Our Story*. CD ROM. Saskatoon & Edmonton: Gabriel Dumont Institute & Arnold Publishing Ltd.

contained and its countless minute advances or retreats that shape its borders often go unnoticed.

Following is an exploration of discourses that individually and cumulatively threaten the well being of Aboriginal peoples.

Building a Web: A Process of Genocide

Genocide, ethnocide, ethnic cleansing, linguistic and / or cultural genocide; the array of terminology suggests an interest in and need to develop a more definitive discourse in the area of genocide studies. "A point where it is necessary to develop models for the analysis of the field itself… in addition to studying the phenomenon of genocide" (Cushman, 2003, p. 523) has been reached. Indeed, Shaw (2007) suggests "the debate on what genocide means has hardly advanced since the beginning of the 1990's" (p. 3). When Lemkin coined the term genocide in 1944 he stated it signified "a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves" (as cited in Heidenrich, 2001. p. 4). Controversies related to genocide, presented earlier in this paper, appear focused on actions and outcomes clearly identifiable and generally in the realm of the physical.

In an analysis of the process that resulted in 1948's Convention Shaw (2007) notes a remarkable outcome was the "separation of genocide from war" (p. 28). Nevertheless he stated there is an "established consensus" (Shaw, 2003, p.4) connecting genocide with war contexts and argues "genocide can be regarded as a

particular form of modern warfare, and an extension of the more common form of degenerate war" (2003, p. 5).

This work, while within a framework of genocide, is removed from a war context and distanced from a context of violence/physical force. Here I digress for use of the term violence calls for clarification for it too is subject to a terminology / categorization debate. Galtung's (1969) coining of the term structural violence referred to previously is an early indicator of a continuing and now current debate. O'Moore (n.d.) suggests "uncertainty prevails as to whether violence is limited to physical abuse or includes verbal and psychological abuse" (¶ 1). The term violence as it is used here adheres to its historic application; "physical force used so as to injure, damage, or destroy; extreme roughness of action" (Websters, 1972, p. 1585) or similarly "physical force exerted for the purpose of violating, damaging, or abusing" (Answers.com, 2009, ¶2). This differs from contemporary use of the term where its meaning may be expanded to include "the intentional use of physical force or power – either threatened or actual – against oneself, another person or a group or community that results in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (World Health Organization, 2005, p.1).

Some would argue, as evidenced by the definition above, that the process to be described falls within the classification of violence. Those who adhere to a more historic understanding of the term may argue it falls outside the classification of violence. This I leave to each reader's interpretation and reiterate, in this context, the statement applied to the terminology / categorization debate

associated with the concept of genocide. That is that this work is not focused on what the action is called or how it is defined. The focus is on creating awareness of the subtlety of the process of genocide in the context of literacy and ways this elusive process ultimately threatens the well being of Aboriginal peoples specifically.

Constructing a Web: A Spider's Process

The building of a spider web stands as an example of a process; following is a brief summary of the spider's process drawn from the work of Gole and Kumar (n.d), and Witt and Reed (1965):

The spider releases a thread to be caught by the wind and carried to an anchor point (Figure 4). The entire web will be suspended on this bridge (Figure 5). Once anchored the spider travels back and forth across the thread to strengthen it. Once this is completed the spider will spin a thread that drops below the anchored thread; this new thread will help form the center of the web (Figure 6). From a central point of this 'dropped' thread the spider will drop to an anchor point on the ground or other surface, spinning a thread to be anchored and creating a 'Y' (Figure 7). The spider then frames the web by spinning threads between each of the anchor points of the bridge and the lower anchor point to create an outside frame. The 'Y,' now encased, has created a centre or hub and the first three radii threads (Figure 9). With this frame in place the spider begins to lay radius threads; threads that go from the center of the web to a point on the outside frame (Figure 11). Once a sufficient number of radius threads are in place the spider will work from the centre to the frame laying temporary spiral silk that

connects the radius threads (Figure 15). With the temporary silk in place the spider will, working from the frame to the centre, lay 'sticky' spiral silk (Figure 18). Once the sticky spiral silk is in place the web is complete (Figure 20). With the web complete the spider is able to sense when prey is captured.

Constructing a Metaphoric Web

Expansion of the concept of literacy detailed here that threatens the well being of Aboriginal peoples may be likened to the process followed by an orb spider when spinning a web. The concept of literacy has developed from a single strand construct – from an ability to read and write – to a powerful and complex web that encompasses other concepts and a wide range of skills and communication methods. Among the concepts being consumed is Aboriginal literacy (George 2002, Antone 2003, Curwen Doige 2001, Balanoff & Chambers 2005). For some users this term may be a reference to principles of instruction, methods or approaches useful when working with Aboriginal peoples in educational environments, particularly when reading and writing skills are required. For others the term may be more encompassing and refer to Aboriginal peoples' ways of being and knowing: ways differentiated from Eurocentric preoccupations with written language. Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being, identified as distinct from others, is at risk of being consumed, of becoming a subcategory of literacy. Loss of status as full, vibrant and unique cultures – through reassignment of social standing to an unknown abyss – threatens the well being of Aboriginal peoples.

Following is a brief description of this process, a process of genocide, unfolding and threatening the well being of Aboriginal peoples through the concept of literacy. More detailed explorations of the stages outlined below are provided in Chapters 6-11.

Metaphorically speaking, one of the first threads in a process of genocide to be explored here and to be cast out (Figure 4) and secured to an anchor point is the concept of literacy (Figure 5). Literacy's perceived worth was amplified and the ability to use and manipulate written language / text – to read and to write – became increasingly valued. Literacy's desirability also subjugated alternative methods of communication, knowledge transfer, and preservation of information, knowledge and wisdom. The subjugation of oral communication and its related traditions was offset by dominance of written language and its traditions. (Figures 6 & 7). With the concept of literacy firmly anchored framing threads were spun. Literacy's alignment with civilization facilitated links with intellectual and moral superiority and a corresponding marginalization of Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being, including those associated with oral traditions (Figure 9). With these structural threads in place, the frame is strengthened by developing radii threads: theories / concepts (Figure 11). The anchor points, while isolated from the web, continue to stabilize; despite its isolation, literacy as it was originally defined continues to stabilize the whole. This process continues until sufficient radii are in place to begin the process of spinning a temporary thread spirally to connect the radii and move the web towards completion. This spiral silk (Figure 15) can be likened to an inflation of the concept of literacy that moves

beyond generalities of culture to encompass specific cultural perspectives such as those put forward in the notion of Aboriginal literacy. Included are ways of being and knowing generally considered the domain of insiders and gained through lived experience. Aboriginal peoples' ways of being and knowing are now in a position to be defined by outsiders and the threat to well being mounts. The concept of Aboriginal literacy then becomes intertwined with complementary concepts; becoming the sticky spiral that, with the support of the web, traps the prey (Figure 18). Once intertwined with other systems and concepts, escape becomes almost impossible; even the spider carefully avoids the sticky thread and moves about the web on radii and other structural threads.

Thus a web that endangers the well being of Aboriginal peoples has been woven. A more detailed description of this process, aligned with a web building process, is presented in Chapters 6-11.

Each of these Chapters explores a portion of a spiral; a component part of a total theory. To accentuate subtle transitions between these component parts repetition has been utilized as a strategy. More specifically, within each chapter a summary of components previously explored is presented for readers prior to introducing additional components. This reiteration brings to the fore the subtle nuances of thought and discourse which propel the spiral forward. This repetition reduces a possibility that the spiral may be obscured by gaps and be unintelligible as demonstrated in Figure 1 below. More practically, readers will have information from previous chapters readily available when situating each component part on the metaphorical and theoretical spiral.

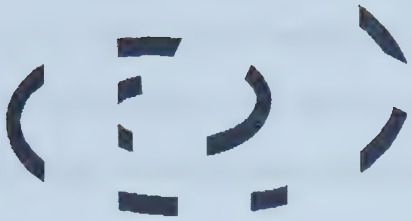

Figure 1: A spiral with indiscernible components

The introduction of a visual aid, as above, to facilitate understanding of the text is another strategy utilized throughout the following Chapters. Vollrath (1992) notes orb weavers "usually build their webs in one go, without interruption" (p. 147) and that "the spider's web is a structure created by a highly specific behavior pattern" (p. 147). The continuous "complex movement pattern" (p. 147) of the spider and the theory aligned with it, like the spiral, similarly benefit from the visual aids. Numerous diagrams are included to guide readers visually through a spider's web building process and a spiraling process of genocide which has facilitated a slow and steady assault on the well being of Aboriginal peoples. Below is a diagram of the above spiral with all components discernable.

Figure 2: A spiral with all components discernable

Chapter Six

Releasing and Anchoring a Concept

Building a Metaphor

The thought of aligning a process which facilitated expansion of the concept of literacy with the web building process of an orb spider was daunting and early efforts directed at creating visual supports were both humbling and enlightening. With backdrop, lighting, branches, thread, glue and various other materials I set out to create a pseudo web by mimicking the step by step process described by Witt and Reed (1965) and Gole and Kumar (n.d.). My appreciation for a spider's perseverance and skillful engineering soon escalated along with a certainty of choice. The following succinct description belies the intricacies of the work:

> The structural components of the web are built in the following sequence… (i) a hori-zontal bridge on which the whole web is suspended; (ii) a Y-structure deter-mining the center; (iii) radii and frame threads; (iv) a temporary spiral, curving in three to four wide turns from center to periphery; and (v) a sticky or catch-ing spiral running in tight pendulum and circular turns from the outside to-ward the hub (Witt and Reed, 1965, p. 1193).

Succinct descriptions and select illustrations provide a means of introducing a working framework for development of the metaphor presented here. However, a failing of such simplicity is an implied ease of construction, reproduction and perfection of product that denies the many variables to which web construction is subject to as well as the variances among those completed. No

two webs are exactly alike nor are the stages of the process exactly the same. The first release thread may be caught by the wind and successfully anchored or it may take several releases. The release point and / or the prevailing wind may prove ineffective and prompt the spider to release from another point. A spider's ingestion of temporary spiral thread and placement of sticky spiral may be interrupted (see Figure 3 below) and a new pattern initiated. Research indicates variables also result from individual experiences of each spider and past learning may "contribute to intraspecific as well as to individual variations in web design" (Heiling, Herberstein, 1999, p. 171). Spiders also draw on and benefit from past foraging experience when making decisions related to web relocation (Nakata, Ushimaru, Watanabe, 2003, p. 371).

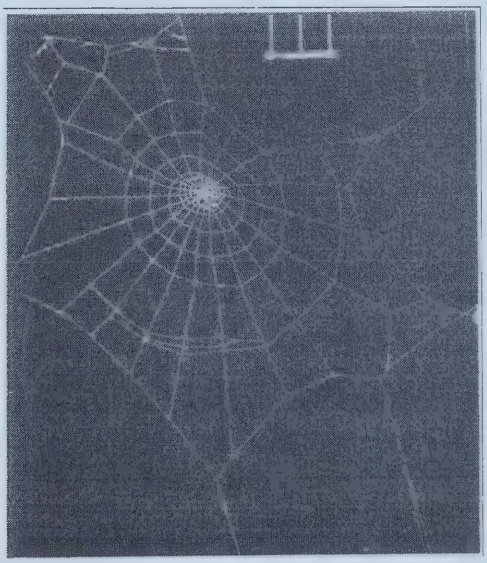

Figure 3: An incomplete web

Illustration Witt and Reed (1965)

> The spider was interrupted during web-building after it had just started to construct the sticky spiral at the right and bottom of the web; the preliminary spiral is still intact. At this point in the construction a change in the movement pattern and thread material occurs (Witt and Reed, 1965, p. 1193).

It is impossible to detail or address the countless variables of the web building process in the metaphor presented. Nevertheless such variables have not gone unconsidered. The variables also validate the crystallized orb which appeared to me in a dream and was referred to earlier. The orb's density, a result of innumerable components packed tightly together, represents a web with all variables considered. I turn now to a component of the process, a spider's release of a bridging thread and a metaphoric release of the concept of literacy.

Release and Anchor: A Spider's Web Building Process (Figures 4 & 5)

To begin the web building process, an orb spider releases a thread to be caught by the wind and carried horizontally to an anchor point (Figure 4) (Gole, Kumar, n.d.). Once a thread is successfully carried by the wind and securely anchored in a suitable location the entire web will be suspended on the bridge created (Gole, Kumar, n.d., Witt, Reed, 1965). Successful anchoring of a released thread depends on numerous factors; these include the wind and both its predictable and unpredictable qualities, distance between release point and anchor point, length of thread released, and degree of the receiving surface's suitability for an anchoring point. Several threads may be released before a bridge suitable to support a web is anchored (Figure 5).

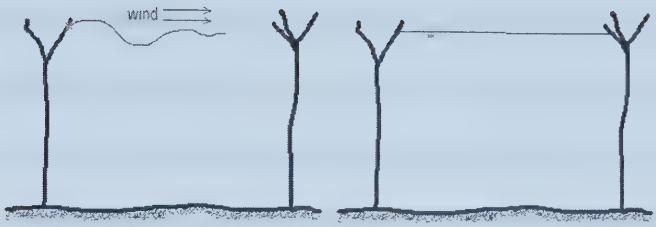

Figure 4: Thread Released Figure 5: Thread Anchored

Illustrations: Gole, Kumar (1965)

Metahorically Releasing and Anchoring a Concept (Figures 4 & 5)

The first strand of this silken concept was released and carried to an anchor in society where it was held fast by widespread acceptance of the concept and the skills it represented. Exacting details of the release and the anchoring process, remain elusive, unknowable. What is known is that the term literacy was first formed in English as a derivative of literate, which dates from the 15th century (Harper, 2008). Literate has its roots in the Latin litteratus and littera (Guralnik, 1972, p. 826), meaning "educated, learned… one who knows the letters" and simply "letter" (Harper, 2008, ¶ 1). In the early 1880's, 300 – 500 years later, the term literacy first appeared. Literacy is defined here as "the state or quality of being literate; ability to read and write" (Guralnik, 1972, p. 825). Literacy as thus defined in this work is not being separated from written language / text, the latter used here in the "classical" sense, (Kelly, 1998, p. 371), meaning the concept is limited to "written entities" (Kelly, 1998, p. 371), and not inclusive of contemporary "texts."

An exploration of discourse leading to ongoing changes of the terms "literate and literacy" between the 15th and 19th centuries is a study unto itself. Burman and Parker (as cited in Ainsworth, Hardy, 2004) suggest "discourse is inaccessible in its entirety, but traces are found in the texts that help to constitute it" (p. 236). This holds true for the contemporary concept of literacy with a centuries old discourse that, while wholly inaccessible, draws on powerful traces of the texts that have helped to shape it. Ong (2002) notes "concepts have a way of carrying their etymologies with them forever. The elements out of which a term is originally built usually, and probably always, linger somehow in subsequent meaning, perhaps obscurely but often powerfully and even irreducibly" (p.12). This principle, key to this work, helps to ensure a solid foundation upon which to theorize. Awareness of such constancy of meaning was instrumental in the conceptualization of this work; the Eurocentric etymologies of the concept of literacy, when aligned with Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being were perceived to threaten the well being of Aboriginal peoples. Consequently the concept / word *literacy*, with its Latin roots (Guralnik, 1972) meaning "educated, learned… one who knows the letters" and simply "letter" (Harper, 2008) will continue to carry these elements with it and be underpinned by an association with an ability to read and write.

Finally, given the focus on literacy, the long history of written language and the time frame this work is situated within, it is worth noting the subjectivity of the selected interval of time. As previously mentioned a focus of this work is to create awareness of the subtlety of a process harmful to Aboriginal peoples;

expansion of the concept of literacy. It is also intended to facilitate implementation of measures designed to halt / reverse the concept of literacy's potential to aid in the "disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion" (as cited in Heidenrich, 2001. p. 4). A risk inherent in the notion of Aboriginal literacy is that Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being will be consumed by and become a subcategory of literacy.

Litteratus, littera, literate, literacy, the terms are indicative of a long history and it is prudent to leave the tracing of the discourse of this earlier era to others. Particularly since the acknowledged subjectivity situates the discourse in a more recent time frame. However, it is interesting to note the appearance of the term literate, derived from the Latin, appears to align closely with the first documented contact between Aboriginal peoples in North America and Europeans. This point of contact also marks the point where oral and written language intersected for North America's Aboriginal peoples.

Chapter Seven

Creating a Centre

The previous chapter began to align in more detail a spider's web building process with an expansion of the concept of literacy harmful to the well being of Aboriginal peoples. The release and anchor stages of a web building process – actual and metaphoric – were explored. With the bridge of the web now intact the next stage of a web building process, the creation of a centre, is explored literally and metaphorically.

Creating a Centre: A Spider's Web Building Process (Figures 6 & 7)

The release thread, now firmly anchored, has created a bridge (Figure 6) that will support the web. The spider now spins a thread that drops below this anchored bridge; the new thread will help form the center or hub of the web. From this dropped thread the spider will descend to an anchor point on the ground or other surface, spinning a thread to be anchored and creating a 'Y' (Gole, Kumar, n.d., Witt, Reed, 1965). A centre or hub is created when the 'Y' is secured.

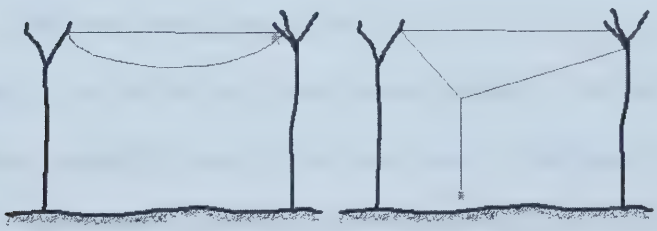

Figure 6: Dropped thread in place Figure 7: Anchoring the hub

Illustrations: Gole, Kumar (1965)

Creating a Metaphoric Centre (Figures 6 & 7)

Following the release and anchoring of the concept of literacy its perceived worth was amplified and the ability to use and manipulate written language / text – to read and to write – became increasingly valued. In an analysis of four generations born between 1898 and 1981 Brandt (2001) suggests "literacy is caught" (p. 104) in an "inflationary cycle" (p. 104). Brandt notes "a rising standard of basic literacy… has forced literate ability to include a capacity to amalgamate new reading and writing practices in response to rapid social change" (p.75). This cycle, subject to "globalizing competition and technological change" (p. 104) demands a "literate ability" (p. 104) from each new generation that surpasses that of previous generations. Consecutive generations in the study "inherited higher and higher piles of literacy resources" (p. 104); however the value of the inheritance was "dramatically lower than…[it]… would have been two generations before" (p. 104). As a result the value of literacy skills continues to increase and gain value as a social capital[4]. Correspondingly, those who do not read and write, or who do not read and write well, have been increasingly marginalized with each passing generation.

Literacy's desirability began to subjugate alternative methods of communication, knowledge transfer, and preservation of information, knowledge and wisdom. This included subjugating oral communication, or "that which is

[4] "Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group[11] – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 8).

spoken, as distinguished from that which is written or otherwise communicated" (Guralnik, 1972, p. 999), and its associated traditions. The subjugation of oral communication and its related traditions was offset by dominance of written language and its traditions.

> The relentless dominance of textuality in the scholarly mind is shown by the fact that to this day no concepts have yet been formed for effectively, let alone gracefully, conceiving of oral art as such without reference, conscious or unconscious, to writing. This is so even though the oral art forms which developed during the tens of thousands of years before writing obviously had no connection with writing at all (Ong, 2002, p. 10).

Despite this, in the North American context, "because the Indian had no written records when the first white man reached this continent, he was dismissed by the white man as having no past" (Stanley, 1983, p. 1). George (2002) reports "our own Indigenous ways of knowing and communicating were subordinated in favor of knowledge and means of communication valued by other cultures" (p. 29). The Europeans, "the educated white man, the missionary, the trader, the government official, the school teacher, tied to written records" (Stanley, 1983, p. 1) brought with them blindness to the effectiveness of other methods of communication, particularly oral methods and its related traditions in preservation of information, knowledge and wisdom.

The lower social standing assigned to oral communication and its related traditions extended to and encompassed those whose ways of being and knowing, as well primary method of communication did not focus on written language. This

assignment of social status facilitated colonizing / societal discrimination of Aboriginal peoples well beyond the realm of language and helped to prepare the North American public for acceptance of the hierarchy associated with reading and writing. It also prepared the public to accept remedial measures such as the forced transfer of Aboriginal children from their home communities to residential schools; this is a well documented example of the internal segregation referred to earlier.

This national policy to "civilize" (Dorion, Paquin, Prefontaine, 2000, CD) in turn facilitated regional and local strategies that included punishing children within the system for speaking their traditional languages as well as a reward system such as the one cited below

> In the early 1950s, nuns teaching at the St. Laurent, Manitoba, school adopted a system of tokens in their efforts to stop the children from speaking Michif. At the beginning of each week students were given ten tokens. When a child spoke Michif they had to give one of their tokens to another student. The student with the most tokens at the end of the week won a prize (Dorion, Paquin, Prefontaine, 2000, Path: Main Menu/Social Life/Education/Aims & History/Methods).

Children were pitted one against another, further weakening their familial, community and cultural identity. To protect themselves children were coerced into collaborating with teachers and administrators. This collaboration helped to

facilitate movement towards a desired end of government and educators; the eradication of Aboriginal peoples' languages and ultimately culture.

Similarly, in Nazi Germany, "the sheer number of victims suggests that the Germans alone, without relying upon local assistance in every occupied country, could not have accomplished murder on such a scale" (Rein, 2006, p. 381). Holocaust survivor Frida Raisman (n.d.), in recently published testimony, reports "Friends no longer recognized us; in mixed families it often happened that the wives denounced their husbands or vice versa" (as cited in Rein, 2006, p. 390).

The diagram below (Figure 8) illustrates the positioning of the notions described above in an early web formation. The next chapter explores the framing phase of the web building process.

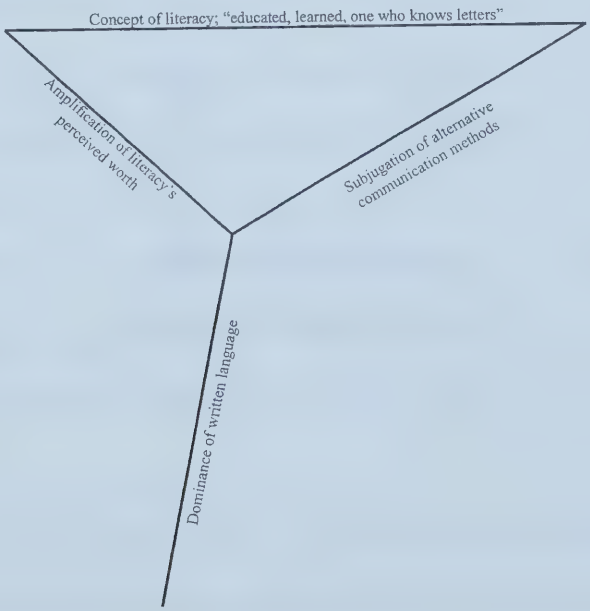
Concept of literacy; "educated, learned, one who knows letters"
Amplification of literacy's perceived worth
Subjugation of alternative communication methods
Dominance of written language

Figure 8: Positioning of components in an early web formation

Chapter Eight

Building a Framework

Literally and metaphorically, a web building process has been initiated. Metaphorically the concept of literacy has been released and anchored. Amplification of literacy's perceived worth has been demonstrated and the ability to use and manipulate written language / text – to read and to write – increasingly valued. Literacy's desirability, it has been revealed, has subjugated alternative methods of communication, knowledge transfer, and preservation of information, knowledge and wisdom. The subjugation of oral communication and its related traditions has been offset by dominance of written language and its traditions. The next stage of the web building process furthers construction by providing a framework.

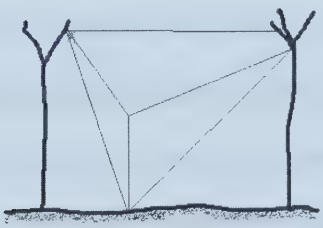

Figure 9: Building a framework

Illustration: Gole, Kumar (1965)

Building a Framework: A Spider's Web Building Process (Figure 9)

With a bridge in place and a centre established the spider then frames the web by spinning threads between each of the anchor points of the bridge and the

lower anchor point to create an outside frame (Gole, Kumar, n.d., Witt, Reed, 1965). The 'Y,' now encased, has become a hub and the first of the radii threads (see Figure 11).

Building a Metaphoric Framework (Figure 9)

Stanley (1983) reports "from ancient times, those people who were self-consciously 'civilized' regarded their less fortunate neighbours as morally and intellectually inferior" (p. 2). In the context of the colonization of North America "the Europeans saw themselves as apostles of civilization, bringing light to enlighten the darkness of ignorance and savagery" (Stanley, 1983, p. 2). Much of what the Europeans offered as enlightenment was dependent on written language and literacy as an indispensable manifestation of civilization. This colonizing attitude continues to hold true; cultures / societies with populations demonstrating high levels of literacy are frequently referred to as advanced while those whose populations do not are referred to as developing, even savage. Chamberlin (1996) reports as recently as 1991 that Allan McEachern, Chief Justice of the British Columbia Supreme Court, dismissed a case brought forward by the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en peoples having concluded their "ancestors had no written language, no horses or wheeled vehicles" (McEachern as cited in Chamberlin, 1996, p. 70), therefore they would have "roamed from place to place like beasts of the field" (McEachern as cited in Chamberlin, 1996, p. 70).

The designation of literacy as an expression of a civilized society aligned well with the origin of the concept, its essence, "educated, learned" (Harper, 2008, ¶ 1), always present, "perhaps obscurely but often powerfully and even

irreducibly" (Ong, 2002, p.12). This essence, coupled with a colonialist penchant for written language, helped facilitate emergence of a subtext linking written language competency with intellectual and moral superiority. Those who lacked or were perceived to possess inadequate literacy skills were considered intellectually and morally inferior. The supposed intellectual and moral superiority claimed by Europeans, the self proclaimed "apostles of civilization" (Stanley, 1983, p. 2) was now being channeled through the concept of literacy as well. It easily became an anchor point for education in the colonies.

These notions of superiority correspond to a simultaneous marginalization of cultures / individuals who did not similarly embrace the concept and its life altering course. Ermine (1995) refers to such alternate paths in relation to the colonization of North America, suggesting it marked the " meeting of two disparate world-views, each on its own uncharted course of exploration and discovery for purposeful knowledge. One was bound for an uncharted destination in outer space, the physical, and the other was on a delicate path into inner space, the metaphysical" (p. 101).

Proponents of one world view brought to this meeting a strong history with written language and entrenchment in its use; the other brought thousands of years of history developing oral language / oral traditions that reflected a different path. History reveals a period of oppression for the First Peoples of North America, now well documented, followed this meeting. Included in this history are countless examples of marginalization of the oral traditions / cultures of the First Peoples of these territories by European colonizers. Waters (2004) notes

"Euro-Americans, while exploiting the people, land, and resources of the Americas, comprehended, of their experiences and encounters with Indigenous people, only what could be conveniently characterized via their Eurocentric ontology" (p. 98). Europeans, "unable to tolerate difference in ways of being… disrespectfully labeled Indigenous people uncivilized, inferior, dirty, ignorant, savage, primitive, etc." (Waters, 2004, p. 101). This "belittling of Indigenous people in the colonial mind made colonizers feel superior to the colonized" (p. 101).

Also embedded in the thought and language of the colonizer was an outcome of European history; the "relentless dominance of textuality" (Ong, 2002, p. 10) referred to earlier. The ontology subscribed to made understanding oral traditions adhered to by First Peoples inaccessible to the colonizer. That it would be possible, without written language, to fully engage in what Barton and Hamilton (1998) have identified as areas of life to which written language is often applied, was beyond their grasp. It was incomprehensible First Peoples were able to, and indeed had for thousands of years, engaged in "organizing life, personal communication, leisure, documenting life, sense making and social participation" (Barton, Hamilton, 1998, p. 248). Nevertheless, First Peoples managed their lives, communicated with others, enjoyed periods of rest and relaxation, maintained records of meaningful events, explored and came to understand unknowns, participated in community living, and engaged with systems of social protocol.

Occurring simultaneously was an ongoing amplification of literacy's perceived worth, continuing subjugation of alternative communication methods,

and extension of written language's reach and dominance. Literacy's alignment with civilization facilitated links with intellectual and moral superiority and a corresponding marginalization of Aboriginal peoples' ways of being and knowing, including those associated with oral traditions.

The diagram below (Figure 10) illustrates the metaphoric positioning of notions in this and previous chapters in a developing web formation.

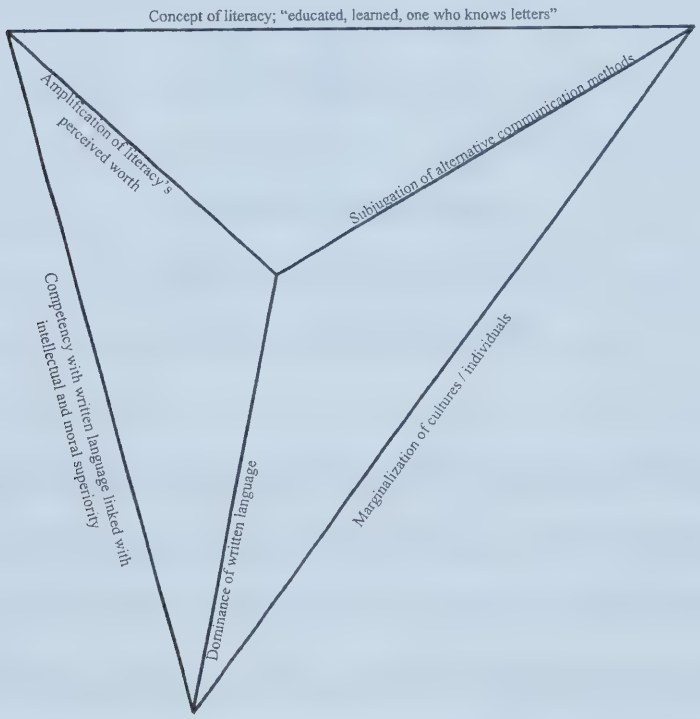
Concept of literacy; "educated, learned, one who knows letters"
Amplification of literacy's perceived worth
Subjugation of alternative communication methods
Competency with written language linked with intellectual and moral superiority
Dominance of written language
Marginalization of cultures / individuals

Figure 10: Positioning of components in a developing web formation

Chapter Nine

Building on the framework

The previous chapter closed with Figure 10 which illustrates the metaphoric positioning, in a developing web formation, of notions presented in previous chapters. Figure 11, below, illustrates placement of radii within the established framework of the web. This chapter focuses on the radii – literal and metaphoric.

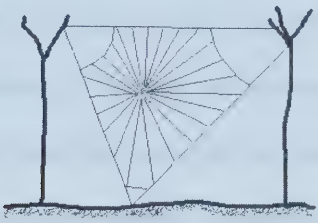

Figure 11: Laying radius threads

Illustration: Gole, Kumar (1965)

Building on the Framework: A Spider's Web Building Process (Figure 11)

With framing threads in place the spider begins to lay radius threads; threads that span the space between the hub or center of the web to a point on the outside frame (Gole, Kumar, n.d., Witt, Reed, 1965). The anchor points, which may be isolated from the web by inner framing threads, continue to stabilize (Figure 9); the web continues to be suspended from the bridge (Figure 3).

Building on the Metaphoric Framework (Figure 11)

Introduction.

Developing theory in a range of disciplines continues to inflate the concept of literacy; notions that link literacy to intelligence and moral superiority and notions that prompt marginalization of cultures whose ways of being and knowing are not grounded in written language frame countless Eurocentric concepts. Literacy has become a fluid concept, a currency whose essence, "educated, learned" (Harper, 2008, ¶ 1) offers those who align with it credibility, worth and influence. Its meaning is "selectively and constantly being reshaped by diverse economic, political, social and cultural shifts and agendas" (Feeley, 2006, p. 2). Such selective and constant reshaping of the concept of literacy, demonstrated in earlier chapters, is occurring at record paces, driven by stakeholders and "sponsors… any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress or withhold literacy" (Brandt, 2001, p. 19). Literacy, regarded as a "raw material, an element or constituent in production" (Brandt, 2001, p. 171) is being reshaped to support a range of ideologies.

Hamilton (2000) suggests there has been a shift from "a psychological or cognitive model of literacy as a set of skills to one which includes the sociocultural practices associated with reading and writing" (¶1). Indeed, the shift extends well beyond the sociocultural practices associated with text to sociocultural practices generally not associated with text. Navigation of the realm of literacy itself is becoming a competency; Brandt (2001) suggests "literate

ability has become more and more defined as an ability to position and reposition oneself amid the flux" (p. 104) of literacy's "rapid changes" (p. 104).

Positioned within this changing landscape and contributing to the web in the form of radii are numerous notions. These notions and the differences among them will be explored in more detail in the following sections of this chapter. These notions include a value continuum related to application and / or use of written language in all areas of daily life. Also included are notions which emphasize an ability to use written language – a default position each assumes to some degree – to obtain information about and make meaning of data within a particular body of knowledge; computer literacy is an often used example. Subtle changes are taken up by other notions and emphasize, through use of the term literacy, alternative methods to obtain information about and make meaning related to data. Visual literacy (Weaver, 1999, ¶ 1) stands as an example of such an alternative method. Other concepts move beyond a transfer of information through written language to embrace communication among people in a range of contexts using undefined methods. "Cultural literacy" (Silver, 2001, p. 26) stands as an example. Such notions primarily draw on literacy's established social capital[5] and its association with skill and competence in any given area. These concepts may also imply a competency in cross cultural communication beyond what may be afforded or realistically expected by experience; particularly when

[5] "Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group[11] – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 8).

similar histories / traditions are lacking. Following are more detailed introductions to the radii threads; the threads spanning space within the web's frameworks.

Exploring a Continuum.

Literacy's essence, "educated, learned… one who knows the letters" (Harper, 2008, ¶ 1), continues to influence emerging concepts. This influence is apparent in what may be viewed as a value continuum / stratification system related to application and / or use of written language. Barton and Hamilton (1998) make a distinction between vernacular and dominant literacy, arguing one is more valued than the other. Vernacular forms of literacy are "learned informally" (p. 252), "have their origins in everyday life" (p. 247.), and frequently "are less valued by society" (p. 252). Areas of life Barton and Hamilton identify as employing vernacular literacy are organizing life (e.g., using address books, tracking appointment information), personal communication (e.g., cards, letters), private leisure (e.g., reading the newspaper, writing poetry), documenting life (e.g., diaries, financial records), sense making (e.g., personal research and deliberate learning through texts such as instruction books or religious texts), and social participation (reading meeting notices, signing petitions) (p. 248). "Dominant literacies are those associated with formal organizations, such as those of education, law, religion and the workplace… and they are given high value, legally and culturally" (p. 252). Barton & Hamilton have also associated dominant forms of literacy with "experts and teachers through whom access to knowledge is controlled" (p. 252). Vernacular and dominant forms of literacy, each with a perceived value, may now be placed on either end of a continuum. On

one end of such a continuum are literacy skills gained and used in daily life, totally or relatively unpolished by schooling. On the other end would be highly developed literacy skills polished through considerable exposure to schooling and other formal institutions, those referred to by Barton and Hamilton (1998) as "dominant literacies" (p. 252).

Barton and Hamilton (1998) in articulating concepts which lend themselves to a value continuum draw attention to what has long been recognized by many on either side – or the center – of the continuum. On one side are those with unpolished literacy skills who have been made to feel the sting of inadequacy. On the other side of the continuum are those with highly polished literacy skills who may enjoy a sense of intellectual and moral superiority. This phenomenon, as demonstrated in previous sections, has a long history with the concept of literacy.

The linking of specific and highly valued literacy skills with inanimate bodies such as "formal organizations" (Barton, Hamilton, 1998, p. 252) is in keeping with the established dominance of written language, equally inanimate. Harrison (2007) notes, "nowhere in a written text can you discern the tone of voice, loudness, excitement, gestures, facial expression, or tempo… all those things that make a story come alive" (p. 145). The written language learned and used in informal environments is equally inanimate; an animated environment does not translate into animated text.

Use of the oxymoron *animated text* brings to mind an equally contradictory concept: oral literature. Webster's (1972) and Oxford (1990),

provide five and six definitions respectively of the term, each with a reference to the written. Nevertheless, Petrone (1990) explains "the term oral literature was once considered to be a contradiction in terms, in the belief that literature applied only to material that could be read" (p. 4). Bauman (1986), concerned with "understanding oral literature as literature, that is, verbal art" (p. 7) also acknowledged a debate. However, Bauman expressed a preference for the "wide currency" (p. 1) of oral literature over alternatives such as "spoken art," or "oral art," (p. 1) which "would be preferable, but these terms have never achieved currency in any of the disciplines where they might serve a useful purpose" (p. 1). Bauman notes "scholars in literature departments operate within a frame of reference dominated by the canons of elite, written, Western literary traditions and texts" (p. 1). The devaluation within the academy of knowledge grounded in oral rather than written traditions is simply a contemporary expansion of earlier beliefs related to Stanley's (1983) assertion that "because the Indian had no written records when the first white man reached this continent, he was dismissed by the white man as having no past" (Stanley, 1983, p. 1). Oral art and oral literature similarly lack the requisite historical written record but semantics of the latter deflect this truth.

Clearly much more than the *written* is at stake in use of the term literature. In defining literature Oxford (1990) makes reference to writing "esp. those whose value lies in beauty of language or in emotional effect" (p. 692) and Webster's (1972) to "writings considered as having permanent value, excellence of form, great emotional effect, etc." (Webster's, 1972 p. 826). It appears, not surprisingly,

that the move to redefine literature to include oral traditions is based on this more narrowly defined concept of literature; it is not about the *written* but about the *valuing*. A desire to ensure alternative ways of knowing and being are valued is not being questioned; my own experience recounted in the first chapter related to defining literacy attests to that. What is open to discussion are the methods chosen to ensure such value and, in this context, the well being of Aboriginal peoples.

Cashing in on a Currency.

The notion of literacy as a form of currency or social capital has been alluded to numerous times. The strategy of aligning with power as a means to strengthen position is not a new one and the value of literacy's currency has prompted numerous alignments with the concept. Such alignments have facilitated an inflation of the concept of literacy and facilitated the term's meaning to become synonymous with competence in or possession of a body of knowledge in countless areas of interest, study or skill. These alignments emphasize an ability or capacity to use written language to obtain information about and make meaning of data within a particular body of knowledge. The areas aligned with the concept are diverse and include technology, business, and health among countless others.

Like other currencies "literacies" have numerous denominations, each with an assigned value. This is in keeping with Barton and Hamilton (1998) who suggest "dominant literacies" are more valued than "vernacular literacies " (p. 252). Extending the vernacular and dominant framework to the realm of subject areas would place competencies aligned with formal institutions or authorities in

the realm of "dominant literacies" (p. 252). Included in the growing list of concepts which draw on the currency of "dominant literacies" (p. 252) through simple use of the term literacy and presented here as radii are:

- One of the earliest and most primary to the concept of literacy as it was originally defined; functional literacy, or "the level of literacy required to get along successfully on a day-to-day basis" (Canadian Education Association, 2009, ¶ 1).
- Financial literacy: "The ability to read, analyze, manage and communicate about the personal financial conditions that affect material well-being. It includes the ability to discern financial choices, discuss money and financial issues without (or despite) discomfort, plan for the future, and respond competently to life events that affect everyday financial decisions, including events in the general economy" (Orton, 2007, p. 8).
- Media literacy "is an informed, critical understanding of the mass media. It involves an examination of the techniques, technologies and institutions that are involved in media production, the ability to critically analyze media messages, and a recognition of the roles that audiences play in making meaning from those messages" (Shepherd, 1993, ¶ 1).
- Technology Literacy: "The ability to use new media such as the Internet to access and communicate information effectively" (Canadian Education Association, 2009, ¶ 13).
- "Biliteracy is knowing how to read in two or more languages" (Canadian Education Association, 2009, ¶ 6).

- Health literacy: "Skills to enable access, understanding and use of information for health" (CCL, 2008, p. 1)
- Critical literacy "is learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations" (Anderson, Irvine, 1993, p. 82).
- Computer literacy: "the ability of an individual to interact with a computer" (Poynton, 2005, p. 861).

The strategic alignment with the term literacy grants the concepts in the above section status as denominations of the currency of literacy. These denominations retain an association with literacy's essence: "educated, learned… one who knows the letters" (Harper, 2008, ¶ 1) and / or power institutions. An extension of Barton and Hamilton's (1992) framework would therefore place these and similar options for obtaining, understanding and disseminating data in the realm of "dominant literacies" (p. 252). On a continuum, these "literacies" may be more valued.

The diagram below (Figure 12) illustrates the metaphoric positioning of radii and other web components, introduced in the previous sections and chapters, in a developing web formation.

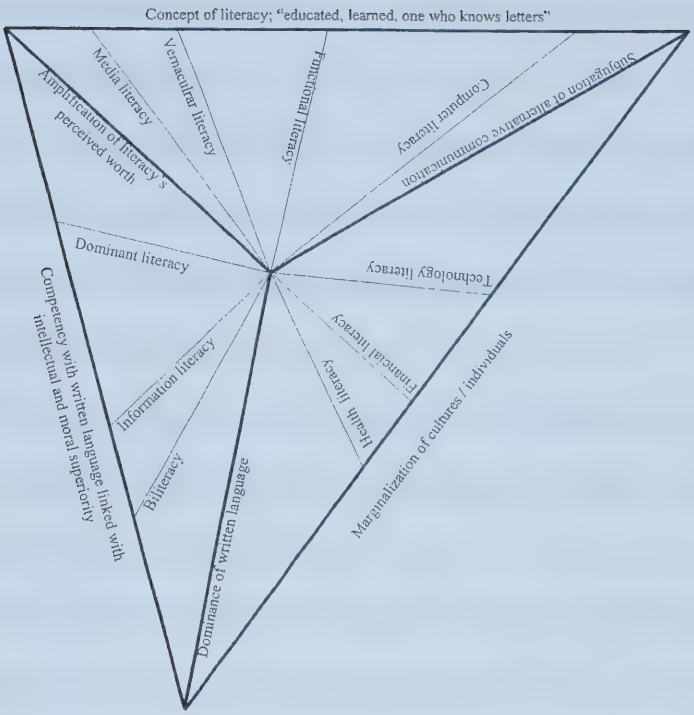

Figure 12: Metaphoric placement of radii threads

Making Change.

However, the concept of literacy has been inflated well outside of definitions grounded in the use of written language. Concepts aligned with literacy now embrace and extend "beyond the functional skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening to include multiple 'literacies.' These new 'literacies' focus on an individual's capacity to use and make critical judgments about the information they encounter on a daily basis" (The Centre for Literacy of Quebec, 2005, ¶1). The term literacy has become synonymous with alternative methods employed to obtain information about and make meaning related to data; visual literacy (Weaver, 1999, ¶ 1) stands as an example. Such an alignment with the

concept literacy also implies an ability to skillfully employ alternative methods. Included in a growing list are

- Visual literacy, defined by Weaver (1999) as one's ability to interpret information presented in a range of graphic forms (¶1). It may also be "based on the idea that visual images are a language" (21st Century Literacy, 2008, (¶1).
- Multiliteracies may be defined as "the variety of literacies we use to communicate within social and cultural groups, and of their modes of delivery" (Healy, 2007, p. 201).
- Critical literacy is inflated to this category by Shor (1999) who removes the reference to reading and writing offered by Anderson and Irvine, inflating the concept beyond written language: "critical literacy is language use that questions the social construction of the self" (Shor, ¶ 4). Healy (2007) contends critical literacy is "understanding that each author and each reader has a version of knowledge; versions differ according to life experience, society, and culture in which individuals develop concepts and knowledge. The purpose of critical literacy is to help students to suspend belief and disbelief during first encounters with text and knowledge, and to become more informed before judging" (p. 201).
- Information literacy "is defined as the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand" (National Forum on Information Literacy, n.d. ¶ 11).

These and other similar inflations, by aligning with the concept of literacy, blur the line between written language communication and other forms of communication. Literacy, by early definitions, indicated communication or information gathering using written language: reading and writing. Contemporary definitions leave the concept borderless; there is no line in the sand, only the ebb and flow of the concept; literacy as reading and writing, literacy as communication, and any and all methods of communication as literacy. Literacy now extends "beyond the functional skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening to include multiple literacies" (The Centre for Literacy of Quebec, 2005, ¶1) and includes communication or information gathering using other methods.

The strategic alignment with the term literacy in its expanded form grants the concepts in the above section status as denominations of the currency of literacy. However, the denominations lack the level of social capital / value associated with literacy's essence: "educated, learned… one who knows the letters" (Harper, 2008, ¶ 1). An extension of Barton and Hamilton's (1992) framework may therefore place these and similar options for obtaining, understanding and disseminating data in the realm of "vernacular literacies" (p. 252). On a continuum, these "literacies" may be on the low end and less valued and possibly expendable.

The diagram below (Figure 13) illustrates metaphoric positioning of radii and other web components introduced in the previous sections and chapters; all in a developing web formation. In the next section additional radii will be added to the construction of the metaphoric web. This will facilitate introduction of the

concept of Aboriginal literacy; the metaphoric spinning of temporary spiral thread.

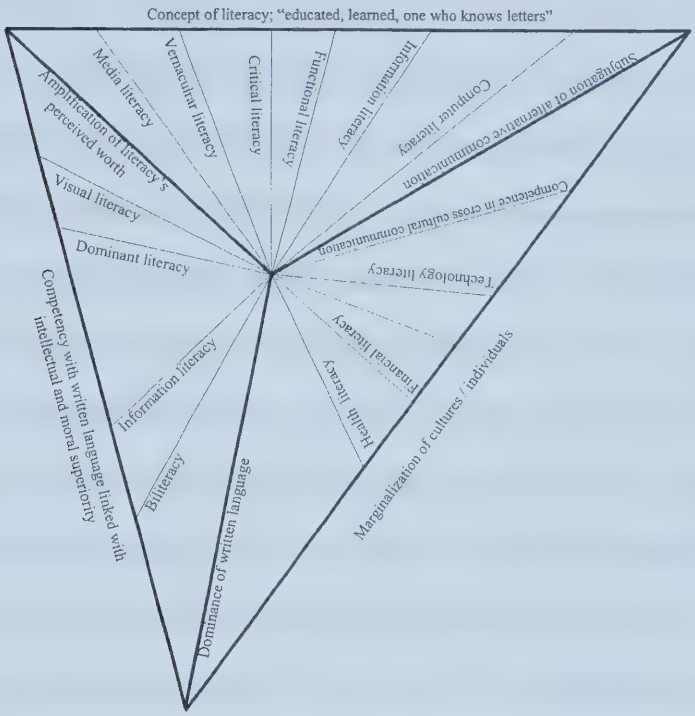

Figure 13: Metaphoric placement of radii threads further on the spiral

Did You Say Literacy?

Numerous radii have been presented in previous sections of this chapter. This section presents the last of the radii threads to be used in the metaphoric construction of a web. The theories explored in this section move beyond gathering and transfer of information using a range of methods to embrace communication among people in a range of contexts – particularly cross-cultural – using undefined methods. These broad notions similarly lack the full social

capital of literacy's essence "educated, learned… one who knows the letters" (Harper, 2008, ¶ 1) but are nevertheless denominations of the concept. They do, however, gain capital through their subject area; cross cultural understanding or knowledge. Further, their alignment with the term literacy, which has become synonymous with competence, implies a level of skill in this subject area. However, notions such as global literacy (Canadian Education Association, 2009, ¶ 14) and "cultural literacy" (Silver, 2001, p. 26) may imply a competency beyond what may be afforded or realistically expected by experience. This emphasis on cross cultural communication extends, by alignment with the Eurocentric concept of literacy, the reach of Eurocentric perspective into other cultures. Included are

- Global Literacy: "Understanding the interdependence among people and nations and having the ability to interact and collaborate successfully across cultures" (Canadian Education Association, 2009, ¶ 14).
- Torres (2002), in describing "racial literacy" (p. 29) suggests it would include an ability "to work within groups to challenge the hierarchies of power that reinforce and create the experience of marginalization" (p. 29), to "identify patterns of injustice that link race to class, to gender, and to other forms of power" (p. 29). Torres notes it also calls for a "different understanding of the meaning of race and its relationship to power" (p. 31) by both the privileged white and the marginalized other.
- Multiliteracies, "the variety of literacies we use to communicate within social and cultural groups, and of their modes of delivery" (Healy, 2008, p. 203).

- "Cultural literacy," (Silver, 2001, p. 26) defined by Silver as "the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultural groups" (p. 25) may also encompass an "ability to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences in the customs, values, and beliefs of one's own culture and the cultures of others" (Canadian Education Association, 2009, ¶ 2).

Readence, Thomas, and Baldwin (2004) suggest

> Word meanings – for individual persons – are in an endless state of flux. The concepts which words represent are constantly being modified by daily experiences during which: (1) new information is fitted into existing schema, or (2) radically new or discordant information is accommodated through the modification of schema (p. 141).

Such modifications have a purpose and when terms such as those above are aligned with literacy each will undergo a level of transformation. The value placed on and the resulting power of written language – text – and one's ability to use it has already been determined and found to be immense. Literacy may be likened to a popular student at school. Less popular students may seek to be included in the inner circle of a more popular individual as a means of enhancing their own social status. This desire to enhance one's own status is a tacit acknowledgement that their current position is somehow inadequate. It appears, at first glance, to be a win-win situation; the popularity of both individuals is enhanced by the partnership.

Literacy then, when paired with other terms / concepts is able to facilitate numerous transformations simultaneously; it elevates the term / concept aligned

with it by lending value, it trivializes in some way the term / concept that it is aligned with, and its own value is enhanced by the pairing. Aligning computer with the capital of literacy borrows value which is applied to "the ability of an individual to interact with a computer" (Poynton, 2005, p. 861). Alternatives such as computer competency are found lacking; they do not convey the sense of essentialism literacy imparts. Literacy's essentialism is affirmed and its status enhanced. This particular pairing of two terms requires minimal modification of either concept given both have strong foundations in written language. "A computer is a programmable machine. This means it can execute a programmed list of instructions and respond to new instructions that it is given" (Tech Terms Computer Dictionary, 2006, ¶ 1). Such instructions utilize written language, a foundational component of literacy.

Aligning culture with the capital of literacy similarly borrows value which is applied to an "ability to interact effectively with people from different cultural groups" (Silver, 2001, p. 25). Alternatives such as cultural competence may be found lacking; they do not convey the sense of universalism and essentialism crucial to cross-cultural communication which literacy imparts. The universalism and essentialism of literacy is affirmed and its status enhanced. However, this particular pairing of two terms – culture and literacy – demands more in the way of malleability from both concepts and raises a number of issues.

Literacy, having embraced competencies well beyond the realm of written language, is now entwined with another debatable and increasingly challenged concept: cultural competency. Indeed, the examples offered as radii (global

literacy, multiliteracies, cultural literacy, racial literacy) are not far from and indeed may be likened to notions of cultural competence. In acknowledging it has taken linguist Richard Dauenhauer (1999) "one lifetime to find out what little he feels he knows about Tlingit" the Dauenhauer's note "it does seem very provincial and very simplistic to assume that any outsider, regardless of enthusiasm and skill, can learn all the nuances of every other culture on earth" (N. Dauenhauer, R. Dauenhauer, 1999, p. 29). This suggests notions of cultural competence and cultural literacy, defined as an "ability to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences in the customs, values, and beliefs of one's own culture and the cultures of others" (Canadian Education Association, 2009, ¶ 2) are problematic.

Cultural nuances referred to by Dauenhauer (1999) are generally considered the domain of insiders and gained through lived experience. The concepts of cultural literacy and its collaborator cultural competency similarly imply such realms of knowledge may be learned in much the same way as written language; culture is reduced to a subject one may become skilled at. Skutnabb-Kangas' (2000), in framing the concept of cultural competence, identifies four components, "**cognitive, affective, behavioural and awareness related** [emphasis in original text] (p. 116). These components relate to "**knowledge** [emphasis in original text] about the relevant culture" (p. 117) and to "deep (positive) **feelings** about and **attitudes** [emphasis in original text] towards a culture, an understanding of it from the inside" (p. 120). The third is a behavioural component that relates to "the capacity to act in culturally appropriate ways with

members of a given cultural group" (p. 120). The fourth and final component of cultural competence Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) identifies is

> **metacultural and metalinguistic awareness** [emphasis in original text], an understanding of the distinctiveness and relativity of one's own (and other) cultures, consciously being able to reflect over on one's own and other cultures, at times distancing oneself from them and looking at them as objects (p. 121).

Culture as implied in the competencies above is itself a debatable concept which may be considered as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor as cited in Fieldhouse, 1995, p. 2). Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1985) offer a working definition, "the material and ideological ways in which a group organizes, understands and reproduces its life as a group" (as cited in Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, p. 116). The concept of culture, when paired with literacy, implies such realms of knowledge may be learned in much the same way as written language. Culture, with all its nuances and natural malleability, is reduced to a subject one may become skilled at. The line between culture and competency is blurred. Literacy, with its existing associations with civilization and intellectual and moral superiority is drawing on the essence of culture and swallowing it up. Battiste (1986) referred to literacy as "a relative social concept more reflective of culture and context than of the levels of formal instruction by which it is usually measured" (Battiste, 1986, p. 24). Indeed, culture is becoming a concept more reflective of influences of written language

and its Eurocentric perspectives than "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor as cited in Fieldhouse, 1995, p. 2).

Finally, the notion that it is possible to gain sufficient knowledge of the lived experiences of others through study and observation is marginalizing and reminiscent of early anthropological thinking. Ermine (2005) notes "misunderstanding occurs because the encounter of two solitudes features disparate worldviews each formed and guided by distinct histories, knowledge traditions, values, interests, and social, economic, and political realities. These differences are under the radar of most cross-cultural interaction" (Ermine, 2005, ¶3).

This is in keeping with the earlier assertion that literacy, when paired with other terms / concepts, trivializes those concepts in some way. Literacy, when paired with culture, trivializes it. Simultaneously, literacy's worth is further amplified.

The diagram which follows (Figure 14) illustrates the positioning of the components in a developing web formation.

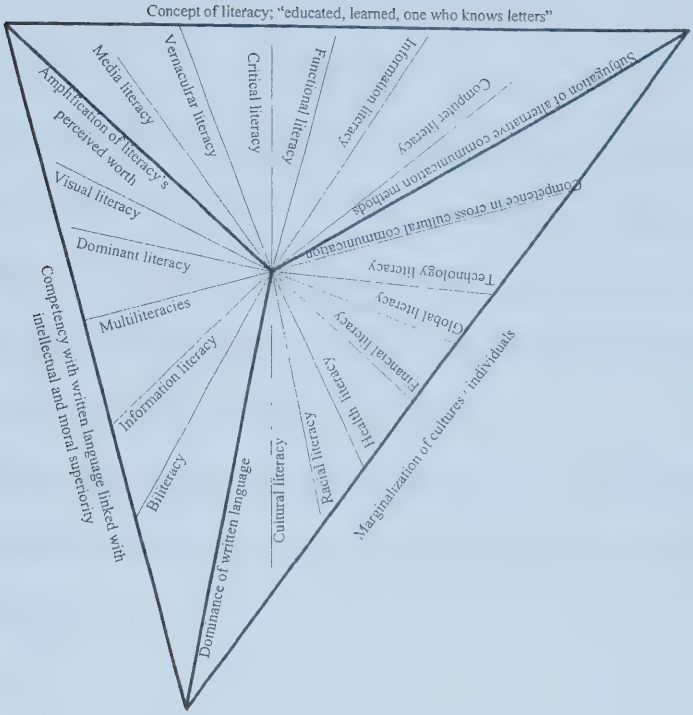

Figure 14: Positioning of components in a developing web formation

The spider has now constructed a significant portion of the web. A significant portion of a theoretical web related to the concept of literacy has also been constructed. Both include a bridge which has been anchored and a centre created. Their centres have been framed and radii threads now occupy much of the space between the outer frames and the centres. In the next chapter both the spider and I will work from the centre to the frame laying temporary spiral silk. This temporary silk will then be used to guide the spider's path during the laying of the sticky spiral silk. The temporary spiral, having served its purpose, will be ingested (Gole, Kumar, n.d., Witt, Reed, 1965) as the spider returns to the centre. These next phases will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Ten

Spiraling

Both the spider and I have constructed a significant portion of the web and as the metaphoric construction proceeds, I am reminded of the crystallized orb which came to me in a dream. As I reflect on the concepts explored in these chapters, each with their subtle nuances and innumerable variables, the appropriateness of the orb with its countless crystal particles is affirmed.

In this chapter, I will move towards completion of the orb; both the spider and I will lay the temporary spiral silk which will guide the laying of the sticky spiral silk.

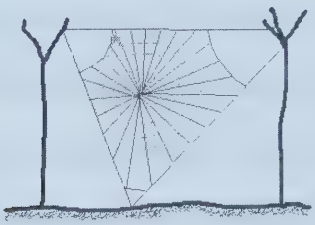

Figure 15: Spiraling

Illustration: Gole, Kumar (1965)

Spiraling: A Spider's Web Building Process (Figure 15)

When a sufficient number of radius threads are in place the spider will work from the centre to the frame laying temporary spiral silk and moving the web towards completion (Gole, Kumar, n.d., Witt, Reed, 1965).

Metaphoric Spiraling (Figure 15)

Literacy, with its essence of "educated, learned… one who knows the letters" (Harper, 2008, ¶ 1) is a powerful concept whose worth is amplified while simultaneously lending value to and subjugating concepts with which it is aligned. It is an ability to read and write, a competency in any given area, it is culture, and it dictates who is civilized, who possesses intellectual and moral superiority and who does not. It is a currency of great worth; Bassett (2005) suggests a "hallmark" (p. 78) of well educated 21st century students will be "multicultural literacy" (p. 78), meaning "they will be conversant with their own history, literacy canon, language, geography, and ecology, as well as being familiar with other cultures" (p. 78).

The bridge and framework readily accepted radii which have taken shape in notions which include value continuums, concepts which emphasize an ability to use written language and / or alternative methods to obtain information about and make meaning of data within a particular body of knowledge. Other notions embrace all forms of communication using undefined methods. Superficial notions of competencies / skills related to understanding and bridging differences between cultures grounded in Eurocentric perspectives and those not are now established. Culture, with all its nuances, is reduced to a subject one may become skilled at, a concept more reflective of influences of written language than "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor as cited in Fieldhouse, 1995, p. 2). The lines between literacy, competency and

culture are blurring as concepts undergo radical transformation in aligning with literacy. The bridge, the spider's centering Y, the framework and radii support and are the crystallized orb taking shape and referred to earlier.

Theories related to literacy now move easily beyond generalities of culture to encompass specific cultural perspectives such as those put forward in the notion of Aboriginal literacy (George 2002, Antone 2003, Curwen Doige 2001, Balanoff & Chambers 2005). This inflation of the concept of literacy is likened to the temporary spiral silk (Figure 15) spun by the spider. Included in the expansion are ways of being and knowing generally considered the domain of Aboriginal insiders and gained through lived experience.

Facilitating such transformation of meaning are concepts which move between or merge different ideas of culture such as the following expanded definition of multicultural literacy: "knowledge of cultures and languages, as well as the ways in which multi-sensory data (text, sound, and graphics) may introduce slant, perspective, and bias into language, subject matter, and visual content" (21st Century Literacies, 2008, ¶ 6).

A natural malleability of culture facilitates such movement; narrower use of the concept may refer to a group identified as distinct from others within a larger group. Terms such as subgroup, subcategory, subdivision, or subculture may be utilized to indicate differentiating characteristics within a larger category. Groups identified as distinct are often considered subordinate, one outcome of their positioning under a larger umbrella. Differentiation may be prompted by any one or more of countless, possible factors. Included and relevant to this context

are literate or illiterate, civilized or savage, moral or immoral, vernacular or dominant (Barton, Hamilton, 1998), oral or written.

Antone (2003A) notes "'Aboriginal literacy' describes Aboriginal peoples' distinct perspective on literacy, in the context of Native education as a whole, and includes culture and language" (p. 11). In the realm of practice Antone (2003A) reports

> practitioners described Aboriginal literacy as distinct from mainstream literacy in that it reflects Aboriginal worldviews in two particular ways. The first is an intergenerational or multigenerational expression of Aboriginal literacy which includes how literacy extends to all areas of life. The second is the particular learning process by which teachers become learners and learners become teachers (p. 12).

George (2002) reports practitioners "agreed that for Aboriginal peoples, there were many types of literacy, not just the written word" (p. 30). Included is a "wholistic base to Aboriginal literacy: facilitating spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical learning outcomes, striving for balance" (George, 2002, p. 38). Sushames (2005) presents, in table form, what is referred to as "the more obvious differences in perspectives of literacy from Indigenous and mainstream viewpoints" (p. 215):

Indigenous Literacies	Mainstream English Literacies (including numeracies)
Interpretation of the land and skies Identification of local traditional food sources (bush tucker) Interpretation of animal behaviour Tracking skills Interpretation of the seasonal influences Oral histories and storytelling Body language Symbols and iconography Indigenous art, including carving and painting Body markings and body painting Dramatic performance, music and dance Knowledge of traditional law and systems Relationship to homelands and traditional country	Critical literacy Reading Comprehension Writing Spelling, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, Numeracy and mathematics Linear timekeeping Oral communication Development of learning to learn strategies Use of information and emerging new technologies, Problem solving Research and analysis Systems knowledge

Figure 16: Table of Indigenous and Mainstream English Literacies (Sushames, 2005, p. 215).

I would argue that this more accurately represents a summary of superficial or outsider perspectives on "literacies" in relation to Indigenous peoples.

In Sushames' table, a dichotomy between the "literacies" is apparent on numerous levels, particularly when considered in the context of a value continuum and other earlier explorations. Further, the "Indigenous literacies" appear to be historical in nature while those of the mainstream encompass more contemporary perspectives that are reflective of the notion of skills development. This is problematic for it perpetuates the stereotype of Aboriginal peoples as

historical or "past" characters. Such superficial distinctions, as are indicated in this table, marginalize and misrepresent the experiences of Indigenous peoples. Herein lies one of the dangers of being defined by outsiders who are lacking experience with and meaningful insight into the nuances of various cultures and knowledge systems.

Nevertheless, it appears a much broader concept of literacy has gained a level of acceptance among First Peoples' educators, mainstream academics and practitioners within the field. Rationale for this acceptance is not lacking and may be similar to grounds provided in the first chapter when recounting my earlier advocacy for inclusion of oral skills when defining literacy. Basis for inclusion included personal beliefs as they relate to the limitations of text, a perceived marginalizing of Aboriginal peoples and a desire to acknowledge the historical and enduring value of orality and its related traditions. Concern for the well being of Aboriginal peoples implicit in this rationale still exists; indeed it has been heightened by increased awareness of both obvious and subtle impacts of language loss, particularly in relation to literacy.

Many obvious impacts related to language loss are well documented. In referring to numerous reports by First Nations' communities Elijah (2002) reported "without fail, every proposed educational reform recommends the inclusion of the language and culture of their community to some degree" (p. 2). Loss of one's language results in loss of "a dynamic force, which shapes the way a man looks at the world, his thinking about the world and his philosophy of life"

(National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 14). In speaking to the importance of language, Brockman et al. state

> Our Native language embodies a value system about how we ought to live and relate to each other...it gives a name to relations among kin, to roles and responsibilities among family members, to ties with the broader clan group. There are no English words for these relationships (p. 3).

More subtly, language loss has restricted or eliminated the ability of many Aboriginal peoples to build discourses in our own languages – such as the one built around literacy and under discussion here – that reflect beliefs as they relate to Aboriginal cultures. Further, full participation by Aboriginal peoples in the building of English language discourses, including educational discourse, has been hampered by a relatively recent entry of the English language into many Aboriginal communities (considering the length of history associated with Aboriginal languages and knowledge systems). At a scholar's level, my own tendency to keep at hand various dictionaries to ensure certainty of meaning in the English language bears this out.

This lends credence to the work of Doll (1989) who suggested "we are limited in our perceptions and evaluations by our own places in space and time, trapped, as it were, by our own historicity" (p. 247). The history of a discourse is intertwined with the history of a particular language. Loss of a mother tongue may hamper an individual's ability to build a discourse that is founded upon and adheres to related cultural beliefs. It can also hinder or impede individual ability

to contribute to or critique discourses built upon other languages and other cultures.

Aligning with Power

Literacy, to reiterate previous points, has been shown to be a powerful construct whose worth is amplified while simultaneously lending value and subjugating those concepts with which it is aligned. Literacy, an ability to read and write, carries with it an essence of "educated, learned" (Harper, 2008, ¶ 1). It is a competency in any given area, it is culture, and it dictates who is civilized, who possesses intellectual and moral superiority and who does not.

Aboriginal literacy, itself a malleable notion, has been shown to seek and accept inclusion in this powerful Eurocentric framework. By aligning with literacy, the concept of Aboriginal literacy becomes a subgroup, a subcategory, a subdivision, or a subculture. These terms, used to indicate differentiating characteristics within a larger category, imply a hierarchy and subsequent subordination to the primary umbrella under which they are positioned. Aboriginal literacy is now a subcategory of literacy, a situation that prompts concern for a number of reasons beyond those already stated.

The phenomenon of being designated a subcategory is not a new one for Aboriginal peoples and this current positioning may be likened to the discussion in Chapter Three that presented the same phenomenon in other contexts. I refer here to the overarching category of Indian with its subsequent subcategories (Status, Non-Status, etc) and resulting "evolving terminology" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002, p. 1). Also of relevance to this discussion are

contemporary efforts to reposition this discourse by returning to the pre-contact custom of Aboriginal peoples' identification of "themselves as distinct from other indigenous people" (Weaver, 2001, p. 242). Examples of terms which are repositioning the discourse away from colonizing language include the more specific terms which identify distinct nations such as Cree or Blackfoot. To now facilitate alignment with another construct that similarly positions Aboriginal peoples as a subcategory, this time as a subcategory of literacy, appears counterproductive. This is particularly problematic when inclusive of Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being. Such categorization marginalizes these ways of knowing and being.

As also suggested earlier, these alignments have a purpose and when literacy is aligned with Aboriginal literacy – Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being – both concepts will be transformed. Literacy, the more valued currency in mainstream Canadian society, will lend value to Aboriginal literacy – to Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being. The result of seeking such value or recognition trivializes Aboriginal ways of knowing and being; 'they' become the "less popular" student referred to in an earlier chapter. This contemporary alignment is not unlike the historical phenomenon referred to in constructing a framework for the web: linkages connecting intellectual and moral superiority with literacy prompted a marginalization of alternative ways of being and knowing.

It is possible this alignment of "Aboriginal literacy" with the construct of literacy is an extension of what Sarris (1993) referred to as "internalized

oppression" (p. 120), how "we often judge ourselves in terms of the dominator's values… or create counter values with which to judge ourselves ("they act white")" (p. 120). Aboriginal literacy may be perceived as a counter value to literacy, a highly valued construct of the dominator. We are using the dominator's values to form an opinion about our own capacity. This can be likened to judgments made by the colonizers who ascertained the capacity of Aboriginal peoples based on their own values and ideas of what "civilized" meant to them coming from other countries. This appears to be a manifestation of how we may "become oppressor-like to ourselves" (Sarris, 1993, p. 120).

A Continuum of Notions

The term subcategory, used to indicate differentiating characteristics within a larger category, implies a hierarchy and a subsequent subordination to the primary umbrella under which the subcategories are positioned. The concept of Aboriginal literacy was launched with an assumption that it differed in some way from the Eurocentric construct of literacy and as a result warranted a separate category. Certainly, Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being are distinct and warrant categorization as a complete knowledge system and this is not being disputed. At issue here, however, is how this status is recognized and achieved.

Possible factors which may prompt categorization within the concept of literacy were cited earlier. Included were vernacular or dominant (Barton, Hamilton, 1998). Barton and Hamilton's (1998) analysis of how literacy skills were used in day to day situations revealed that some applications of literacy were more valued over others. Information gained from their analysis was easily

extrapolated to a value continuum. To recap, on one end of such a continuum are literacy skills gained and used in daily life, totally or relatively unpolished by education. On the other end are highly developed literacy skills polished through considerable exposure to schooling and other formal institutions, and referred to as "dominant literacies" (p. 252) by Barton and Hamilton (1998).

The strategy of aligning with power becomes more problematic when the continuum above becomes inclusive of notions related to literacy and presented in previous chapters. These notions, when viewed in the context of a continuum, will similarly be considered in light of their perceived value. Notions considered influential will be more highly valued than those considered commonplace. Figure 17 presents the notions in this context.

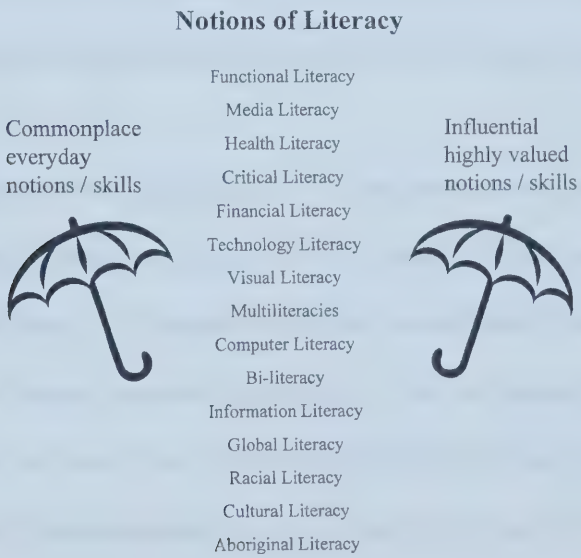

Figure 17: Commonplace and influential notions of literacy

It is recognized designations to each "umbrella" will be arbitrary and placements on a continuum will vary person to person. Nevertheless, Barton and Hamilton's (1998) findings provide clues as to likely designations. Notions "associated with formal organizations, such as those of education, law, religion and the workplace" (p. 252) are likely to be more highly valued. Notions "learned informally" (p. 247) and with "their origins in everyday life" (p. 247) will be valued less. Aboriginal literacy, grounded in "the traditional Indian way of learning by doing" (Deloria Jr., 1994, p. 12) is likely to be considered in the latter. Not only are Aboriginal peoples' distinct ways of knowing and being referred to as "a form of literacy," easily "learned" or acquired by others / learners, they are positioned on the less valued end of a continuum. Assignment of status as a less valuable category of literacy threatens the well being of Aboriginal peoples in much the same way as the marginalization referred to in historical Canadian contexts.

The concept of "Aboriginal literacy" is a malleable notion that merges one system into another, blurring boundaries between literacy, competency and culture. Aboriginal literacy is a malleable subgroup regardless of how it is defined; it may be literacy, it may be competency, it may be culture, it may be all of these. The issue that arises from this sub categorization process is that Aboriginal peoples' distinct and ancient ways of being and knowing are now in a position to be defined by outsiders, not necessarily Aboriginal. This is a source of the threat to well being. This is a familiar scenario, not unlike the shaping and assignment of social status in the context of first recorded contact: savage or

civilized? Where on the continuum of "literacies," extended from the work of Barton and Hamilton (1999), will Aboriginal literacy be positioned? The realization that the identity of Aboriginal peoples has become subject to the concept of literacy in such an intimate way is astounding and alarming.

It was at this point in development of the theory that I once more drew thankfully from the strength provided by the vision with which I had been gifted; the crystallized spider web. Understanding the orb represented a complete, crystallized theory I was heartened and turned to the final chapter of the spider's web building process and the laying down of the sticky. The orb, incorporeal in my dream, was yet to be made manifest in the physical realm through the placement of words on paper.

Chapter Eleven

Laying Down the Sticky

Previous chapters have reviewed the following stages of a literal and metaphoric web building process: release and anchor of the bridge, creation of a hub / centre, construction of a framework, the laying of radii and the first spiral. This chapter focuses on the laying of the capture thread, the "glue like sticky catching silk used to catch its [the spider's] prey" (Gole and Kumar, p. 1).

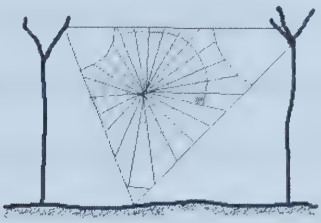

Figure 18: Laying down the sticky

Illustration: Gole, Kumar (1965)

Laying Down the Sticky: A Spider's Web Building Process (Figure 17)

With the temporary silk in place the spider will, working from the frame to the centre, lay down the 'sticky' spiral silk. The temporary spiral is used as a guide and, having served its purpose, will be ingested (Gole, Kumar, n.d., Witt, Reed, 1965). Its replacement, the sticky spiral, is elastic and coated with a sticky substance (Eberhard, 1976, p. 481); this spiral "will impede an insect long enough for the spider to seize it" (Witt, Reed, 1965, p. 1195).

Laying Down the Metaphoric Sticky (Figure 17)

Construction of a metaphoric web is almost complete. Theories related to literacy now move easily beyond generalities of culture and encompass specific cultural perspectives such as those put forward in the notion of Aboriginal literacy. Specific cultural viewpoints – ways of being and knowing of particular Aboriginal peoples – now fall within the domain of literacy. Researchers Balanoff, et al. (2006), in the community of Ulukhaktok in Canada's Northwest Territories, identify "how people could (and still can) 'read' the weather" (p. 1) as one of several "multiple literacies of Ulukhaktok" (p. 1). Further, these "multiple literacies… are how the people made meaning and passed on those meanings prior to colonization and the introduction of linear print based literacies" (p. 1).

The reference to "print based literacies" (Balanoff, et al. 2006, p. 1) is timely and opens an avenue for introduction of another strategic alignment. Aboriginal literacy, already strategically aligned within the construct of literacy, is now aligned with a specific component of literacy: text. Alignment with text, an obvious key component of literacy, provides benefits similar to those bestowed on notions aligned with literacy as a whole concept (e.g.: computer literacy, health literacy, etc.). Similarly cashing in on the currency of text, "arts based research," as a denomination of literacy further contributes to an expansion of the concept of literacy. These two concepts, arts based research and Aboriginal literacy, like all other denominations of literacy, however unintentionally and inadvertently, have become entwined by their respective and commonly defined alignment with text,

a component of literacy. Together they create the metaphoric equivalent of sticky spiral silk. To elaborate on this, the concepts of literacy and arts based research are concepts in transition. The previous chapters have provided details of literacy's evolution well beyond the classic and contemporary discourses around text. I turn now to a brief description of arts based research and an exploration of its entwinement with Aboriginal literacy.

Arts Based Research

There appears to be agreement amongst researchers related to the continuing transformation of arts based research. Piantanida et al. (2003) report "a culture of arts-based research in education is still evolving" (p. 187). Mullen (2003) similarly remarks "an explosion in arts-based inquiry has recently occurred in the social sciences" (p. 166). What exactly is being transformed?

> Art-based research can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies" (McNiff, 2008, p. 29).

Finley (2008) suggests "arts-based inquiry has the potential to facilitate critical race, indigenous, queer, feminist, and border theories and research methodologies" (p. 71). Mullen (2003) notes "creative forms of research representation – narrative, life history, poetry, drama, visual art and more – have come to the fore, eliciting response, luring participation, and demanding attention" (p. 166). The brief introductory comments related to the concept of arts

based research are indicative of its complexity and a full exploration of the concept is clearly beyond the scope of this work. However, this brief exploration will focus on one component of arts based research, a component which shares a parallel approach with the concept of Aboriginal literacy. Arts based research and Aboriginal literacy both engage in the discourse and definition of "text" in a manner which results in legitimization of their own development as denominations of literacy. Both claim "text" as meaningful aspects of themselves. Art as an artistic expression is not being explored, nor is the notion of artistic expression as text. Art is only implied in its discursive alignment with text in this specific, brief discourse around arts based research.

Webster's defines text as "the actual structure of words in a piece of writing; wording" (p. 1472). The Cambridge dictionary defines text as "the written words in a book, magazine, etc., not the pictures" (¶ 1). Merriam Webster offers "the original words and form of a written or printed work" (¶ 1). Nevertheless, like the concept of literacy the term is becoming increasingly inclusive at the urging of academics and practitioners in the fields of literacy, arts based research and beyond where other forms of cultural expression and communication are referred to as "text."

Denzin (1997), drawing on the work of Strine, Long, and Hopkins (1990), concludes "performance is simultaneously a text and an interpretive process" (p. 183); this is furthered as arts based researchers move to include performance as "text" (Conquergood, 1998). Conquergood (1998) in advocating for performance as a research method confirms previous assertions regarding "the almost total

domination of textualism in the academy" (p. 25). However, he suggests performance would "be most useful if it interrogates and decentres, without discarding the text" (p. 33). He asks some provocative questions, questions relevant for proponents as well as opponents of arts based research in contexts beyond performance art. They include, "Whose interests are served by the textualization of performance practices?" (p. 25). This begs the question, whose interests are *harmed* by the textualization of the art?

The marginalization of ancient peoples and knowledge systems is implied in the suggestion that these alternative knowledge systems, to maximize their power, be accompanied by text. This requirement could clearly harm the interests of those whose knowledge systems have stood for centuries without textual support. Such views in support of "textualization" serve to validate Eurocentric perspectives referred to in earlier chapters, including McEachern's 1991 dismissal of a case wherein he cited the plaintiffs "ancestors had no written language" (McEachern as cited in Chamberlin, 1996, p. 70) and so likened them to "beasts of the field" " (McEachern as cited in Chamberlin, 1996, p. 70),

Once again literacy, through its essential component of text, elevates the concept aligned with it by lending value. In this instance arts based research is elevated. Literacy / text simultaneously trivialize the concept of arts based research, and enhances its own value. Aligning arts based research with the capital of text, an essential component of literacy, borrows value from literacy which is applied to "the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making

of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts" (McNiff, 2008, p. 29).

In this transformation text's essentialism is reaffirmed. Arts based research has to accept the position of "unpopular student." Arts based research, by placing itself under the umbrella of "literacy" through an alignment with text, has transformed the value and meaning of the artistic processes and the different forms of artistic expression.

Arts based research and Aboriginal literacy, both "less popular students," now drop to secondary positions in ways certainly unanticipated when alignments with text were initiated from within their own spheres of interest.

Conquergood (1998) also asks,

> What are the consequences of thinking about performance and textuality as fluid, exchangeable, and assimilable terms? What is at stake in the desire to blur the edges, dissolve the boundary, dismantle the opposition, and close the space between the text and performance? (p. 25).

Numerous things are at stake, including the legitimacy of arts based research: its theory, its methods, and perhaps most importantly, its outcomes. If arts based research findings are to be valued as highly as the knowledge established via traditional text based research methods, its methods may need to be considered as rigorous and valued as highly as Conquergood (1998) and others believe text to be in the academy. This necessitates the legitimization of performance, sculpting, drawing and numerous other practices of art as research methods. This is a task that may be accomplished by blurring the lines and

aligning these practices with text in much the same way as the concepts referred to as radii in a previous chapter align with literacy.

Again, the strategy of aligning with power as a means to strengthen position is not a new one. The stakes related to blurring the boundaries of text are raised to include the legitimacy of Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being. However, alignment with power also means aligning with the principles which support it. The outcomes of such alignments are not always predictable as demonstrated in the following section.

A continuum of text

Another aspect of literacy may be similarly viewed in the context of this continuum: the expanded notions of text. Now warranting placement on the continuum are expressions of culture (Jousse, 2000), performance (Conquergood, 1998), "narrative, life history, poetry, drama, visual art and more" (Mullen, 2003, p. 166). Included are "non-alphabetic forms of writing such as beads and strings and carvings and paintings and petroglyphs and pictographs and chests and blankets" (Chamberlain, 1999, p. 70). These placements are made possible by the expansions of text referred to in the previous chapter describing the sticky thread of the web.

It is anticipated not all of these "texts" will be valued equally. Some will be viewed as a less valuable form of "literacy" or "text" and others more highly valued. Barton and Hamilton's (1998) analysis, when similarly applied here, suggests "texts" of Aboriginal peoples will not be highly valued. Here the questions posed by Conquergood (1998) earlier call for restatement

What are the consequences of thinking about performance and textuality as fluid, exchangeable, and assimilable terms? What is at stake in the desire to blur the edges, dissolve the boundary, dismantle the opposition, and close the space between the text and performance? (p. 25).

Aboriginal people's distinct ways of knowing and being are at stake. Cultural artifacts, representative of the distinct way of knowing and being possessed by Aboriginal peoples have been reduced to a form of text.

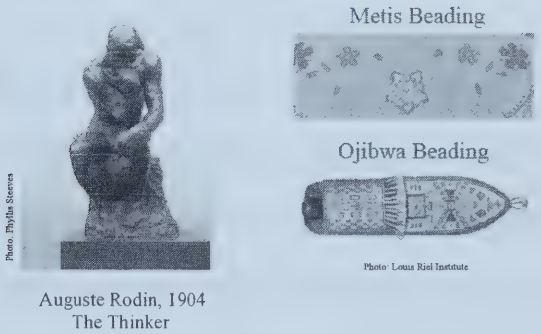

Figure 19: Cultural artifacts

Text, art and expressions of culture, aided by expansion of the concepts of literacy and arts based research, are converging. The expansion of the concept of text aligns with the expansion of the concept of literacy; Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being are literacy, expressions of culture are text. The sticky is sticky. I turn now to the next and final chapter; a synthesis of the metaphoric web building process presented in Chapters 5-11.

Chapter Twelve

Architecture and Location

Figure 20: A complete web

Illustration: Gole, Kumar (1965)

"Walk into my parlor said the Spider to the Fly" (Howitt, 1829, ¶ 1)

The concept of Aboriginal literacy, in aligning Aboriginal peoples' distinct ways of knowing and being with the Eurocentric construct of literacy threatens the preservation and well being of Aboriginal peoples. The process, detailed in previous chapters, has been shown to relegate the distinct knowledge system of Aboriginal peoples to the level of words, theory and discourse; all of which are subject to literacy and positioned to be defined by others. Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being, no longer positioned as a distinct and valued knowledge system, will slip into an abyss of "literacies" and competencies. Erasure of Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being, foundational to well being, will facilitate further erasure. All distinguishing aspects of Aboriginal peoples' cultures – beliefs, values, and behaviours – will be erased from practice, memory, and ultimately history.

Summary of metaphorical web building process

The theoretical construction created in previous chapters was initiated with the release of the concept of literacy. The concept, with its essence of "educated, learned… one who knows the letters" (Harper, 2008, ¶ 1) supports the web. Once anchored in Canadian society the perceived worth of the concept of literacy was amplified and the ability to use and manipulate written language / text – to read and to write – became increasingly valued. Literacy's allure facilitated a subjugation of alternative methods of communication, knowledge transfer, and preservation of information, knowledge and wisdom. The subjugation of alternative methods of communication, specifically oral communication and its related traditions was offset by the increasing dominance of written language and its traditions. The designation of literacy as an expression of a civilized society, coupled with a colonialist penchant for written language, helped facilitate emergence of a subtext linking written language competency with intellectual and moral superiority. These notions of superiority correspond to a simultaneous marginalization of cultures / individuals who did not similarly embrace the concept and its life altering course. The structure, now fully framed, is further developed with the addition of notions which have aligned with the concept of literacy. Included are vernacular and dominant literacies (Barton, Hamilton, 1998), notions that emphasize or maintain an affiliation with written language, notions that align with the concept yet focus not on written language but on alternative methods to communicate and make meaning of data. Other notions aligned with the concept of literacy emphasize cross cultural

communication using a range of methods suitable for apparently limitless application in cross cultural contexts.

These notions and the structure which supports them have woven together the concepts of literacy, competency and culture and all their attendant discourses. All contribute to literacy's expansion; literacy as reading and writing, literacy as competency, literacy as culture and civilization. Notions of competencies / skills related to understanding and bridging differences between cultures have moved beyond the superficial to encompass specific cultural perspectives such as those put forward in the concept of Aboriginal literacy. The concept of Aboriginal literacy, already strategically aligned with the construct of literacy and its many notions, has become more entwined with Eurocentric constructs. Here I refer to the concept of arts based research and a specific component of literacy: text. The ultimate outcome of continuing to engage within the expansionist processes associated with the concept and practice of "literacy" as described here is erasure of Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being.

Architecture and Location

A Spider's Web Building Process

The web of an orb spider "is the outcome of a complex building sequence in which different structural components are laid through different movement patterns" (Japyassú, Ades, 1998, p. 932). Craig (1987) notes that orb webs "vary greatly in architecture" (p. 157). Variances may be due to a number of influencing factors (Thévenard et al. 2004, p. 85) and include mass of spider (Coslovsky, Zschokke, 2009), prey density (Rypstra, 1983), "environmental conditions – e.g.

light, temperature, humidity, wind, gravity, web supports, presence of prey," (Thévenard et al, 2004, p. 85) and the "trade off between building very effective but energetically costly traps and building less effective traps requiring faster reaction time" (Zschokke et al., 2006, p. 964). Web location is also subject to variables. Nakata et al. (2003) report "most orb-web spiders are not completely sedentary and often change web sites" (p. 372). Further, studies suggest choice of site is dependent on variables which may include density and quality of prey (Adams, 2000).

Relocating in the Realm of Education

Language loss.

The metaphoric web created in previous chapters is also an outcome of a complex building sequence and it too is subject to variances in architecture and location. Alternative locations or focus areas, still within the realm of education, include other legitimate literacy related issues. Included are the limitations of the English language itself when it is used to describe or interpret and communicate Indigenous value systems and the variety of relationships such systems support (Brockman et al., 1997), the displacement and/or eradication of the languages of Aboriginal peoples, and the devaluing and displacement of oral and other traditions prompted by literacy/written language.

Principles of instruction.

The architecture of the web built in previous chapters might have been structured around principles of instruction and the concept of "Aboriginal literacy" as a form of pedagogy. This alternative way of looking at the concept is

equally complex and informs and is informed by the constructed web. Goodson (1998) notes "pedagogy is concerned with the transmission of values and ways of knowing" (p. 27), suggesting "the distinction between transmission as an aspect of pedagogy and transmission *as* [emphasis in original text] pedagogy is… crucial" (p. 27). Further, "implicit in the notion of transmission is a one-way communication… *from* [emphasis in original text] the teacher *to* [emphasis in original text] the pupil" (p. 27). Goodson (1998) acknowledges there are "substantial forces maintaining transmission as the dominant pedagogy" (p. 28) and proposes it is time to move towards a "positive alternative pedagogy" (p. 28) and argues "for a new model of classroom learning" (p. 29).

Deloria Jr. (1994) notes "teaching methods vary considerably between the traditional English-American process of intense memorizing of facts and doctrines… and the traditional Indian way of learning by doing" (p. 12). It is here, in the space between these two methods, where an alternative location for the concept of Aboriginal literacy, as pedagogy, is often found. This perspective presents Aboriginal literacy as a principle of instruction; a realm more suitably referred to as principles of instruction based on foundations of Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being. Perhaps such wordiness is what propels this particular use of Aboriginal literacy. Alternatively or additionally such terminology may be designed to acknowledge the valuable contributions of Aboriginal peoples to this realm of education. Here, as in previous discussion, the notion of what is valued has been raised.

The impact of value has been demonstrated in previous chapters and the value at issue here in the realm of principles of instruction can be seen to be woven into the architecture of the web built in previous chapters. Indeed, as implied above this area of interest warrants and is sufficiently complex to construct an entire web to illuminate issues it raises. However, here the spider's dilemma is manifested and choices relating to size and location of the web made. Exploration of principles of instruction, with its potential for construction of another web, therefore remains uncharted. Nevertheless, the web constructed in previous chapters has not disappointed and is sufficiently complex to warrant representation by the orb like sphere which appeared to me in a dream.

Relocating in the Realm of Genocide Studies

It has been noted that expansion of the concept of literacy as detailed here, with its real and potential outcomes, situates this work within the field of education, particularly literacy, and simultaneously requires reference to the work within genocide studies. Chapter Three introduced the concept of genocide as being under scrutiny and briefly explored numerous issues related to terminology and categorization. The third chapter also presented a synthesis of the fields of education and genocide studies in a section titled *Education as an Instrument of Genocide*. Chapters 5-11 offer, in the fore grounded realm of education, a detailed exploration of the expansion of the concept of literacy. The exploration of the finer points of this process, and the location of the metaphorical web presented here, also substantiate criticisms related to inadequate advances in the field of genocide (Cushman,2003, Shaw, 2007). Indeed, the web constructed herein could

be relocated not only to alternative realms of education but to numerous realms of genocide. Following is an exploration of alternative architectures and locations for a similar web in the realm of genocide studies.

Intention.

As evidenced by the brief introduction to the concept of genocide in Chapter Three, intention, or the level of "determination to do a specified thing or act in a specified manner," (Guralnik, p. 733) appears to be central to many arguments. Lemkin's 1944 definition of genocide and its inclusion of a "coordinated plan of action" (as cited in Heidenrich, 2001, p. 4) and Fein's (1993) "deliberate destruction" (p. 10) as a requirement of ethnocide demonstrate this. Skutnabb-Kangas' (2000) categories of active and passive used to define cultural genocide also bears this out.

Whether the aim is "annihilating the groups themselves" (Lemkin as cited in Heidenrich, 2001. p 4), or "deliberate destruction of the culture of a distinct group" (Fein, 1993, p. 10), Steeves (2003) suggests the lines of intention may be blurred but the results may be just as devastating. Practices which threaten the well being of a group physically and/or culturally may be employed by individuals and collectives who may support such practices consciously and unconsciously, thinkingly or unthinkingly. Further, individual and collective levels of awareness, tolerance and support may vary and impact on intention.

Other factors that may impact on intention include scale of exposure to and acceptance of / agreement with 'preparatory' discourse akin to what was offered by Ryerson, Reed and others in the Canadian context or Hitler in the

German context. Additional factors include anticipated outcomes and perceptions of the extent that self and / or others may benefit or be harmed. Further, practices perceived as threatening 'only' cultural well-being may not be acknowledged or as readily recognized as those associated with 'absolute' or 'physical' genocide. Here again a number of possibilities exist as to why acknowledgement may be lacking or not forthcoming. Included are the frameworks that currently help to define the terms and numerous semantic diversions. Numerous issues may be drawn from the closely related and impacted realms of politics and economics to name two.

So what then constitutes an accepted level of intentionality and who will decide? Intention of erasure is undeniable in the Canadian context nevertheless a designation of genocide is not forthcoming. Woolford (2009) suggests "it must also be acknowledged that extermination is not the only means available to achieve group destruction, although it is certainly a potent and primary means" (p. 87).

Practices of genocide.

It should be noted theory and discourse are merely starting points for identification and elimination of practices whose outcomes put cultures and peoples at risk. Practices that have impacted on the well being of Aboriginal peoples include various forms of segregation, appropriation of homelands, eradication of ancestral languages, indoctrination of children, denying the culture recognition, historical and contemporary misrepresentation, renaming of nations,

places, individuals, etc., dividing the community, and legitimization of the practices themselves as well as the beliefs that support them (Steeves, 2003).

Effectiveness of such practices (Steeves, 2003), measured by harm to well being, is dependent on several factors. The practices are complementary therefore the support each of the practices lends to the others is a factor. As one result, the whole – all practices utilized to destroy a culture – is strengthened. In turn the whole helps to sustain, strengthen and legitimize each practice. The process may be likened to a spider web. An orb spider weaves together numerous strands to create a web; a single strand is insufficient. Segregation practices alone, while bringing harm to targeted nations, would be insufficient to erase the culture. However, the risk to well being increases when complementary practices are simultaneously and / or consecutively utilized, when homelands are appropriated, when ancestral languages are eradicated, when children are indoctrinated, when the nation's culture is denied recognition, when historical and contemporary recordings misrepresent the nation, when the nation is renamed (again and again) along with places, individuals, etc., when the community is divided, and when the whole is legitimized by government and others in authority. The cumulative effect is potent and has potential to destroy the nation.

This inbuilt support system effectively empowers the process and enables outcomes that would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a single practice to achieve. Given a sufficient period of time and the support of all segments of society a culture would collapse and disappear under the weight of these practices. This complementary support system does not, however, eliminate nor

diminish the role of the individual; personal support, however passive, for any one of the practices, supports the whole and facilitates movement towards the desired outcomes. Human agency sustains and as necessary remodels the system/web or constructs a new one more suited to a changed environment.

Unbridled support for the practices by all segments of society will increase the likelihood of and reduce the period of time necessary for unqualified success. Passive support, on the other hand, will decrease the likelihood of unqualified success and increase the time needed to achieve aims. Additional variables impacting the process include opposition to the practices, active or passive, which may slow the course. The process outlined suggests a measured and somewhat restrained approach. Parallels with methods used in New Zealand to assimilate Maori peoples, reported by Ward and Hayward (1999), may be drawn: "ultimately, but unhurriedly" (p. 379).

More specifically, in the Canadian context, tacit acceptance – by a sufficient number of Canadians – of discourse intended to present First Peoples of Canada as 'savages' enabled furthering of a process that facilitated acceptance of actions designed to cause the "disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals" (Lemkin, as cited in Heidenrich, 2001. p. 4).

Human agency.

Theory, discourse, practice: common concepts in many academic disciplines, including genocide studies and education where they are often bandied about as though existing independent of human agency. Nor is this shortcoming limited to these realms. In the field of peace studies Galtung (1969), who coined the concept of "structural violence" (p. 170), characterized it both by what it is not and what it is, "…the type of violence where there is an actor that commits the violence as *personal* or *direct* [emphasis in original text], and to violence where there is no such actor as *structural* or *indirect* [emphasis in original text] (p. 170)."

The use of language to depersonalize and eliminate human agency from actions that threaten the well being of others effectively purges personal responsibility for systemic maintenance and other outcomes. Such detachment from the process and outcomes violates "the ontological understanding that all things exist in relatedness" (Martin, 2006, p. 77).

History as articulated herein suggests many are complicit in acts of genocide.

Chapter Thirteen

Concluding Remarks

Craig (1987) offers the following summary of key steps in the process of capturing prey in a spider web

> Prey capture at spider webs is best thought of as a three step process. From the viewpoint of an individual insect, capture probability is a product of (1) the probability of contact with the web (Chacon & Eberhard, 1980; Nentwig, 1983; Rypstra, 1982; Craig, 1986), (2) the probability that after insect and web make contact, the web is able to absorb the prey's kinetic energy (Denny, 1976) without breaking, and (3) the probability that the insect will adhere to the web's surface (e.g. Nentwig, 1982). Each of these probabilities depends upon prey flight behaviour and mass (p. 136).

In keeping with the metaphor of an orb spider's web, the success of the process of genocide outlined in this research, from the viewpoint of a Cree Métis woman, is similarly subject to a broad three step process. The success of the process depends on how variables unfold, including those drawn from the spider's process

> (1) the probability of contact with the concept of literacy and its attendant discourse (the web presented), (2) the probability that the present concept of literacy is able to absorb Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being without the loss of its power and essence and (3) the probability that the ways of knowing and being of Aboriginal peoples will continue to be aligned with and held fast to the concept of literacy.

These broad variables may be explored to expose the finer points of which each is composed. These might then be presented in a web formation not unlike the one described herein which illustrates the creation and development of the concept of Aboriginal literacy. Here again the spider's dilemma is manifested and a decision made to retain focus on the initial process. Nevertheless, as a starting point, it may be said that Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being have made contact with and become entwined within the concept of literacy. Secondly, indicators suggest huge potential for the Eurocentric construct of literacy to successfully and fully absorb Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being. This absorption appears to be possible without any loss of "literacy's" essence or power. Indeed, the opposite seems apparent.

DeWilde (1943) notes

> the stickiness on a sticky spiral thread is generally stronger than the thread itself, and if a relatively large object is attached to a thread of sticky spiral in an orb and then pulled away, the thread itself breaks before it comes unstuck from the object or from the rest of the web (as cited in Eberhard, 1976, p. 481).

The spider's process indicates that even if disengaged from the notion of Aboriginal literacy traces of the concept of literacy will adhere to Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing and being. This is perhaps what Kinuna (1996), a traditional Minneconjou Sioux teacher, foresaw when he advised "be aware of when one system merges into another" (Cassette recording transcription, p. 10). He cautioned "a seal in the zoo is out of context. He doesn't know his real world.

So we get to be out of context, out of tune" (Cassette recording transcription, p. 12).

What transformations might Aboriginal peoples anticipate in their own lives from the establishment and acceptance of the concept of "Aboriginal literacy"? How will a web in this new context – Aboriginal peoples' ways of being and knowing as "literacy" – be constructed?

In weighing the probability that the ways of knowing and being of Aboriginal peoples will continue to be held fast to the concept of literacy, I am reminded of the words of Cree Elder John Crier (2007), who, in speaking of the work of Aboriginal academics suggests that each one needs to ask, "What needs to be separated out of the community to enable it to survive?" (oral presentation).

Indeed, this is a question that is very relevant to this context and one that requires careful and likely collective consideration if the well being of Aboriginal peoples is to be safeguarded and supported. Construction of a new web is imminent, its location and architecture is, however, yet to be determined.

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